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"WALLED IN"

by Frank Blighton

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"WALLED IN"

by Frank Blighton

CHAPTER ONE

JOE DUNN WIELDS A "JIMMY"

PRR-R-LING! The outside telephone wire leading to the switchboard of Bluevale Police Headquarters gave a prolonged ring.

Sergeant Sam Snyder plugged in.

"Hello! The Chief's on his vacation. Want to speak to the acting chief? One moment."

Snyder connected himself with the office.

Detective Joe Dunn, acting chief in the absence of the department's head, reached for the instrument at the signal. Snyder spoke to him:

"Say, Joe."

"What is it, Sam?"

"Somebody up to Monte Cristo's house wants to talk to you."

"Huh! Who it is?"

"His housekeeper, Mrs. Harvey."

"Put her on."

Joe Dunn knew that the "Monte Cristo" mentioned was Guy Rodin, a wealthy stockbroker, who lived in the fashionable Marvel Park. The name was typical of the man. Rodin had come from "nowhere" some years before and purchased a mansion in Bluevale in which he resided. He was a bachelor, a man of abundant means and very good taste. His business was in New York and little was known of him.

"Good-morning, Mrs. Harvey."

"Is this the acting chief of police?"

"Yes. I'm Detective Dunn. What is it?"

"Mr. Rodin went into his library last night. He is still there. The windows are all closed and locked. The door is locked and the key is in the door. I've called him. He doesn't answer. The electric light is burning in the room. Will you please come up and investigate?"

"At once, Mrs. Harvey. Meantime, say nothing to any one."

"I will not, sir."

Joe Dunn hung up and went to the door. He spied Mike Gilroy. Mike was just coming off duty in his flivver. He was a smart young cop, and had been on the twelve o'clock midnight to eight o'clock morning "trick."

Mike stepped to the box and Joe stepped inside.

"Take me up to Guy Rodin's house," said he, "and let me imagine I'm a gentleman, will you?"

"And I'm to imagine I'm your chauffeur?" asked Mike.

Joe nodded. They sped away. When they reached the house Mike lingered. Joe walked up the steps with a firm step, but not a brisk one. He was the oldest man in

the Department, in his thirty-fifth year of service.

Mrs. Harvey met him at the door. He stepped into the hall. The stairs leading to the upper floor occupied the right half, a big grandfather's clock ticked solemnly at the left. A few steps beyond was the library door. It was oak and brass-bound, an old-fashioned door like the house. It had shrunken with the flight of time a little way from the jamb. He could see the yellowish light from the library filtering out into the dusky hall.

Mrs. Harvey was disturbed, but by no means distracted. In a few words she told Joe that there had been a "benefit" the night before for the Old Folks' Home of Bluevale on the lawn; some fifty or seventy-five people had been present besides the guests, all of whom were still upstairs.

Joe looked at the door. He had "nippers" with which he could have turned the key. It was an old-fashioned lock. Mrs. Harvey said Mr. Rohin always carried the key. Sometimes he locked himself in when he did not want to be disturbed, but never before for all night.

Joe walked out with her and looked at the windows.

"Get a ladder," said he. "I'll be back in a minute."

He went to Mike's little yellow car.

"Have you got a young crowbar?" he asked.

"I've got a jimmy," said Mike, "th' wan I tuk off that dinge I grabbed for burglary that got seven years. Ther Chief give it to me for a sooveneer."

"Lend me that sooveneer," said Joe, "and come wid me. Kape a still tongue in yer head and a wide eye. I don't like the way that clock ticks in the hall. 'Tis a fine ould clock, too."

Mike stared. There was something solemn beneath the veneer of the veteran police officer's levity. He handed over the jimmy and followed Joe back around the graveled walk to the unscreened window.

Mrs. Harvey was waiting with a step-ladder.

He mounted the ladder and looked within.

Then he inserted the edge of the steel bar beneath the sash and drew back on the lever with a firm, strong grasp.

There was a short, sharp, grinding screech that made the housekeeper shrink.

Joe Dunn lifted the window-sash and carefully stepped into the library.

CHAPTER TWO

BEFORE BREAKFAST

"I'VE sent for a physician," said the detective. "Tell me, Mrs. Harvey, how long have you worked for Mr. Rodin?"

"Since he came to Blueville—five years."

"Who else is in the house?"

"His nephew, Claude Rodin, a boy of twenty; Mrs. Julia Carteret and her daughter, Cynthia, a girl about seventeen; Mr. Salvatore DiSilva, a business friend of Mr. Rodin's; Mr. and Mrs. Fawcett, who are sailing for Europe shortly. They are from Chicago."

"What servants?"

"Minnie, the cook; Martha, the housemaid; Mr. Jackson, the gardener, and Harry Wiley, the chauffeur."

"Did Mr. Rodin have a secretary or valet?"

"Not at the house, sir. What has happened?"

"We will wait until after the physician comes," said Joe Dunn. "Just go back to work, please, and say nothing. By the way, have you spoken to any one about this?"

"Only to you, sir."

"Where did you telephone from?"

"From the dining-room."

"Any one overhear you?"

"I am not sure. I do not think so. Minnie and Martha both sleep out. They had not come yet. Mr. Jackson also lives at home. He had not come yet. Wiley is at the garage. He has rooms above it. I doubt if he is up yet. He generally gets up in time to drive Mr. Rodin to the train."

Joe waved her away. He took out his notebook and put down all the names. Then he followed her into the dining-room where

she was directing Martha to lay the breakfast cloth.

"What time was this lawn-party finished last night?"

"About eleven o'clock."

"When did you last see Mr. Rodin?"

"He was just going to the library and had the key in his hand."

"Did you speak to him?"

"No, sir. The maids had gone and there were a lot of dishes to wash. We served cake and ice cream to the guests. I went back to wash the dishes."

"And then you went to bed?"

"Yes—up the rear stairs. My room is on the third floor at the rear."

"The other guests or visitors were all in bed?"

"As far as I know, yes, sir."

Joe went back to the library door. A moment later the sound of wheels on the gravel sent him to the hall door.

Doctor Hinchcliffe came briskly up the steps. With him was Lieutenant Seaton of the Police Department, carrying a camera and a tripod. Joe Dunn put his finger to his lips for silence. He stepped into the library, closed and re-locked the door.

Guy Rodin's corpse lay prone on a costly rug. He had been shot through the head high up on the left side. It was a ghastly sight. Ten or eleven feet away lay the silver-handled pistol, of .38 calibre. One chamber had been discharged. Nearer to the door lay a right-hand glove.

"Stand there, Doctor," said Joe Dunn to the medical examiner of the Police Department, "until Lieutenant Seaton makes some photographs."

For some time there was no sound in the room but the clicking of the camera shutter. There was plenty of clear, north light, even for the last "shot" which Joe Dunn directed to be taken at the door itself.

Outside Mike Gilroy sat like a statue on his cab's seat. He wanted to be inside, but he was a good "cop." He obeyed orders implicitly.

"Outside," said Joe Dunn.

He led the way to where he had entered by the window. Three photographs more were made.

Then Joe Dunn beckoned. Four husky cops appeared with a stretcher and a long white cloth. Doctor Hinchcliffe gave them their orders. When they had gone, the place where the corpse was found was covered with the white cloth.

Joe Dunn re-locked the library door. Then he went into the dining-room and spoke to Mrs. Harvey.

"Are the guests upstairs yet?" said he.

"They are waiting the breakfast-bell."

He looked at his watch. It was fifteen minutes to nine.

"What time does Mr. Rodin generally go down to New York?"

"On the nine-forty-seven train, as a rule. If he wants to go earlier he takes an earlier train, but always gives orders the night before. He gave none last night."

"I wish you would ring that bell," said Joe quietly. "Then, as the guests come downstairs, tell them to step into the library. Send the maids, the gardener and the chauffeur, too. And come yourself."

Mrs. Harvey clasped her hands nervously.

"Do you mind if I ask you a question?" she asked.

"Not now, please," said the detective. "I want to ask a few myself first."

She rang the bell. The guests trooped down.

Mr. DiSilva led the way. He was chatting gaily with Cynthia Carteret and her mother was talking with Claude Rodin. Mr. and Mrs. Fawcett followed.

"Hello!" DiSilva stopped short at sight of the detective. "Where's Guy?"

"I'm Acting Chief Dunn of the Bluevale Police Department," said the detective. "Please step into the library."

They did so. The assembled and perplexed servants followed.

Just then the telephone rang.

Doctor Hinchcliffe, who was in the hall, stepped to the door and gestured for Joe Dunn.

"You will all please wait where you are now," said Joe, "until I come back."

He hurried to the telephone.

"Is this the residence of Guy Rodin?"

"Yes."

"What has happened to him? This is Jonifer, city editor of the New York *Blaze*. I'm talking from my office. There's a news bulletin on the Wall Street ticker that Rodin has committed suicide. Is it true?"

"This is Acting Chief of Police Joe Dunn of Bluevale speaking. I am at Mr. Rodin's house. There is nothing to be said as yet."

"Is he dead?"

"There is nothing to be said as yet."

Joe hung up and stepped back into the library, frowning.

CHAPTER THREE

IN THE LIBRARY

GUY RODIN hadn't begun life in Bluevale by being "walled in." But he had ended it that way. Joe Dunn had looked at the key to the door. A clever housebreaker or criminally minded man might have crept into that room by the use of "nippers" on the old-fashioned key. No one had gone in that way.

Guy Rodin had passed from life to death apparently a rich man. Evidences of it were numerous.

That group of ten human beings huddled near the door were rooted fast in the pregnant silence. Joe Dunn looked at them all. They were each and all apparently benumbed with the grisly sight of that sheeted outline on the floor. On all their faces was a concession of perplexed despair, and there was none of them that seemed so much as a straggler on the doorstep of hope.

They were walled in by the suddenness of it all and by their own feelings. The landscape of the past few hours had fled and with it the secret of the shot which had ended Guy Rodin's life.

"Did any one hear a shot between eleven o'clock last night and the time you were summoned to breakfast this morning?" asked the detective.

There was no reply audible. Several shook their heads.

Joe Dunn stepped forward and pointed to the gun which lay on the floor.

"Does any one here know whether or not that pistol belonged to Mr. Rodin?"

His quiet, matter-of-fact questions were reassuring.

"Yes," said Claude Rodin, "that was my uncle's."

"When did you last see it?"

"I cannot say, sir. But I first saw it when I came back from Harrow."

The detective knitted his brows. Where's Harrow?"

"A public school in England, sir."

"Did you see your uncle last night?"

"No, sir. I was motoring with Miss Carteret. We had tire trouble and did not get back before he had gone into the library. But I expected to see him."

"He asked you to see him last evening?"

"Yes, sir."

"I'll talk to you alone later," said the detective. "Who else talked with Mr. Rodin last evening, either before or after the lawn party?"

Mr. and Mrs. Fawcett, Mr. DiSilva and Mrs. Carteret all said they had before the party. There had been a conference in the library "on business."

"Very well. I'll talk to you four people later on that," said Joe Dunn. "Which of the servants is Jackson, the gardener?"

Jackson stepped out of the group.

"I want to talk to you later, too," said the detective.

"Very well, sir," said Jackson, "I shall be at the green house."

Ensued another moment of awkward silence.

The detective spoke again.

"As nearly as I can learn Mr. Rodin came into this room last night about eleven o'clock. That was the last time he was seen alive. Did any one here see him afterward, either dead or alive?"

There was no reply.

Joe Dunn stepped forward and picked up the gun.

"One cartridge has been discharged," he said. "The bullet from this weapon and this one cartridge instantly killed Mr. Rodin. Does any one here know why he should kill himself?"

"I know he had everything in the world to

live for," said Mr. Fawcett, "and so far as I know there was no reason at all why he should kill himself. In fact, there were ten million reasons why he should not."

"What were they?" asked Joe Dunn, as if he had an eternity in which to hear each separate reason enumerated.

"Dollars," said Mr. Fawcett. He bit the word off short and crisp.

"All right," said the detective. "Yet here is what seems to have happened: Mr. Rodin walked into this room after the lawn fête. He locked the door from the inside; he locked all the windows; he seems to have shot himself. The bullet went into his head on the upper left-hand side. Wasn't he left-handed?"

"How did you guess that?" asked DiSilva in a tone of surprise.

"I didn't guess it," said Joe Dunn mildly. "I saw where he had written his name on a paper on the desk over there." He nodded toward the secretary-desk which stood astride the corner, a tall, mahogany affair. "The handwriting told me he was left-handed. By the way, what does that paper contain?"

"An agreement," said Mr. Fawcett, "by which Mr. Rodin, Mrs. Carteret, Mr. DiSilva and myself all pooled our stock in the Jalisco Copper Company preparatory to selling the property to a syndicate next week for about fifteen millions of dollars."

"The Hay-what Company?"

"It is a Spanish name, sir. The mine is in Mexico. J-a-l-i-s-c-o," Mr. Fawcett spelled out the word. "The 'J' has the sound of 'H' in Spanish."

"Thank you. My Spanish isn't much," said Joe Dunn. "Now let me go on, please. Mr. Rodin locked the door; he locked the windows. Then, some time during the night, it seems he shot himself. The door was locked when I came in this morning. The windows were locked. I had to pry one of them open. Any one can see from that that apparently he must have shot himself. Why should a man going to get ten million dollars shoot himself?"

There was no reply.

CHAPTER FOUR

JOE DUNN'S THEORY

"I CAN'T figure out why he did," went on Joe Dunn easily and casually. "But he was, you might say, walled in this room. None of the windows were broken. The door was locked. I have examined the key and I can tell you right now that nobody used any nippers on it—like these."

He produced his own.

For the first time since coming into the room Cynthia Carteret spoke. Her face was an enticing oval, despite its pallor. Her dark hair framed it like a picture.

"It is quite impossible that he should have shot himself," said she. "Why, I talked with him yesterday at dinner before going for the drive with Claude and he was quite happy."

Joe Dunn spread his hand in a gesture of superior experience.

"That don't signify," said he. "Lots of people have killed themselves and the last time their friends seen 'em they seemed to be happy. And nobody ever did find out how or why they killed themselves."

The girl's startled eyes flamed with a sudden animation.

"Couldn't he have been murdered?" she asked.

Joe Dunn smiled almost pityingly, if not cynically. He did not reply, and the girl shrank back to her mother's arm, to which she clung in a new horror, with her eyes on the sheeted outline beyond. Then the detective went on talking:

"It's a funny suicide, too," he began.

"Funny?" echoed Fawcett angrily. "What is there funny about it?"

"Excuse me," said Joe. "I mean it's a queer sort of suicide. You know, I ain't got a college education, but I can't figure out how he could have killed himself."

He paused. DiSilva spoke:

"I thought you said he had?" he pointedly remarked.

"No; I said it seemed that way. Now, let me show you something. I'm going to make-believe I'm going to kill myself with this

same pistol. First I'll take out the cartridges."

He did. Then he raised the weapon. He used his left hand and twisted his hand far back. The pistol assumed an almost vertical position. The detective tried to pull the trigger. Even with the weapon's hammer raised he could not.

"You see," he went on, "I can't kill myself. The bullet went in Mr. Rodin's head too high and too far back of the left ear for him to kill himself. The way I held the pistol must have been the way he would have had to hold the pistol, because the course of the bullet shows that. It came out down below his right ear and at the point of the jaw. Doctor Hinchcliffe can tell you that. He's the medical examiner for the police department."

They were rooted in the fresh mystery.

"Excuse me," said DiSilva. "It is a very unpleasant subject, but since we are talking about it at your official request, may I ask one question?"

"I can't promise you to answer it, for I may not know the answer," said the detective. "But what's the question?"

"If Mr. Rodin did shoot himself, which we'll assume long enough to let my question be answered, wouldn't he be likely to hold it close to his head?"

"I think I would, if I was going to shoot myself," said the detective. "But what about it?"

"Assuming that he did shoot himself and assuming he held the pistol close to his head, would not that fact be shown by the body—powder stains or something of that sort?"

"I'm glad you asked that question, Mr. DiSilva. Yes, it would. What's more, the body does show powder-marks. That's what made it seem so queer to me, you see. I couldn't figure out how he could hold the pistol to make the bullet go into his head—and yet there were the powder stains."

Another voice broke the sudden stillness. It was Cynthia Carteret speaking. Her dark eyes glowed with new animation.

"Mr. Dunn," said the girl, "suppose some one else held the pistol close to Mr. Rodin's head and fired it. Would not that leave a powder stain?"

"Y-e-s," slowly admitted the detective, "it would."

"Then," said the girl, with the positiveness of youth, "he didn't commit suicide at all. He was killed—murdered!"

"Why, Cynthia!" remonstrated her mother; "how can you say such things?"

"Because it must be true," said the girl stoutly. "And what is more, Mr. Dunn knows it is true better than I know it. Don't you?"

Her impetuous zeal made her turn and put the question to the man whose name she had uttered.

"Oh, yes," said Joe, "I knew it all along; but how could anybody get into a room and shoot Mr. Rodin and then get out again with the door locked on the inside and the windows locked on the inside? And how could he shoot Mr. Rodin without the victim letting out a yell, or something? Nobody seems to have heard the shot. Did anybody hear a yell or a scream or a groan—or any voices at all?"

Claude Rodin spoke up almost at once. His voice was quivering with grief, rage or excitement. It was hard to say. Perhaps from all three. And, again, it may have been from fear.

"Mr. Dunn, if what you say is true—and from the way you say it it seems to me it must be true—then my uncle was shot down by some enemy. I never knew him to have an enemy in his life."

"You've been away in England to school," replied the detective. "Yes, I guess it was an enemy. I can't think of any friend of your uncle's that would want to shoot him. Can you?"

"N-no!" sobbed the lad. "I can't."

Salvatore DiSilva spoke: "Let me understand you," said he. "I am very much puzzled about this, no less than terribly astonished and profoundly grieved. I cannot make it seem real that Mr. Rodin is dead, for one thing. For another, I cannot see how he could be locked in this room, as you say, be shot down and the man that did it——"

"Just a moment, Mr. DiSilva; I didn't say a man did it."

"Or a woman, then, Mr. Dunn. I cannot

see how either a man or a woman could have shot him down and then leave the room. Have you a theory for that?"

"I have," said the police officer unhesitatingly. "But it's only a theory. A man or a woman who understood this here Fourth Dimension could do it, and do it easily."

His astonishing reply left DiSilva blinking and the others submerged in a fresh sense of mystery that for the instant outweighed the ghastly death of the owner of this splendid mansion.

CHAPTER FIVE

"MOTIVE, ROBBERY."

"I AIN'T educated enough to say that I understand all about this here Fourth Dimension," went on Joe Dunn placidly, "but I've tried to find out some things about it. In fact, I had a case once right here in this town, which was most as mysterious as this one."*

"Are you *sure*," asked the girl, "that the murderer didn't go out through the window?"

"Yes; let me show you. That part ain't puzzlin' me. You see, the window was shut. Mr. Rodin had shut it. He shut it before he was shot—not afterward—because a man that's shot dead can't shut no window."

"But the murderer might have shut it," said the girl, "after he shot down Mr. Rodin, might he not?"

"He might—not!" Joe Dunn's reply was very positive. "That part ain't hard to figure, either, because, you see, if the window was open when the murderer shot down Mr. Rodin, then somebody in this here house would have been bound to hear that shot, beyond doubt."

"Correct!" Mr. Fawcett clipped the word in his crisp fashion. The girl subsided.

"So, you see," said Joe Dunn quietly, "the murderer was in the room after the window was shut, and it was then that he fired at Mr. Rodin. But Mr. Rodin didn't know the murderer was here. He was shot down before he knew a thing. He died instantly. If he'd only been fatally wounded and had recovered complete consciousness I doubt if he could have told who shot him."

They were petrified afresh.

"You're wondering how I know that," he said. "Well, here's a glove. The murderer wore this glove." He replaced it in his pocket. "He wore it so's he wouldn't make any fingerprints. There are none visible. But he didn't wear one glove; he wore two."

"Was the other glove in this room, too?" asked Claude Rodin.

"Yes; here it is." Joe walked over to the secretary-desk and pulled the other glove from beneath it He also held it up. There was a bit of dust on the fingers. "This is the left-hand glove," he continued. "This here dust got on this left-hand glove from behind this piece of furniture."

He indicated the combination secretary-desk astride the corner near the window without the screen.

"The murderer was hidden behind that," went on the detective, "but Mr. Rodin didn't know that. When Mr. Rodin walked over and shut this open window the murderer shoved this tall piece of furniture on the casters without makin' a sound. He used his left gloved hand to do this. That's how the dust got on this glove, as I've said. Watch me."

He pulled the old-fashioned secretary out soundlessly and stepped behind it. From the orifice the muzzle of Mr. Rodin's pistol protruded.

The trigger snapped. So did several sets of nerves among those present. The cook fainted. Joe came out. He told the girl after she revived to go to her room and stay there until he came to see her. She wabbled unsteadily out of the room.

"A man or woman," said Mr. Fawcett, "doesn't kill another man without a motive. Why was Mr. Rodin killed, if I may ask? Can you tell me that?"

"I figger that the motive was robbery," replied Joe Dunn.

"Was the body robbed?"

* See "The Time Detective," by the same author, in "Mystery Magazine," No. 133.

"No."

"Is that safe robbed?" Fawcett pointed to it and his manner became very excited.

Joe Dunn walked over to the safe and opened the door.

"This here door was open, just like this. No, Mr. Fawcett—just stay where you are, please. This is police business, remember. I can't have anybody mixing up with these here papers. But what was it you wanted to know?"

"Man alive!" exploded Fawcett, "tell me—is there a bunch of Jalisco mining stock in that safe?"

Joe Dunn reached within. He took out a bundle of green and gold engraved certificates. They were folded. On them was a written memorandum.

"This here paper says there is one thousand shares here," said he.

"Count them," hoarsely replied Fawcett; "that is, examine the certificates, if you please, and see if the numbers on them total up one thousand."

Joe Dunn did. Phlegmatically he added up the various numbers after he had written them down in his memorandum book.

"Just a thousand," said he.

"Thanks," muttered Fawcett huskily. "Now let me explain. Mr. Rodin called Mrs. Carteret out from New York, and wrote to me and my wife from Chicago, and Mr. DiSilva from Gaudalajara, Mexico, to meet him here last night for dinner. After dinner and before the lawn fete started he explained that he wanted our stock. He was about to make a delivery of the majority of the shares to a British syndicate."

"When?" Joe Dunn's question shot over like a bullet.

"Tomorrow, he said. This thousand shares represents a majority of the outstanding stock. It is par value, a thousand dollars a share. That makes a million dollars. The syndicate is to pay fifteen millions for it—all of the majority shares—and Mr. Rodin has another thousand shares in the bank downtown, his personal holdings."

"Why?" asked the detective.

"Because, my dear sir," replied Fawcett, "while the Jalisco Mining Company is capitalized at only two millions, the mine has gone into ore of such fabulous richness that it will probably pay a half-hundred millions in the next ten years."

CHAPTER SIX

"I'LL CATCH HIM—WITH THESE"

THE detective turned to the other servants and the housekeeper.

"You may go," said he. "Do not try to leave the grounds, however. Mrs. Harvey, you'd better be getting breakfast ready. I'll drop out into the kitchen myself after a bit and impose on you for a cup of coffee, maybe. Go on, Mr. Fawcett. I kin see you want to say something else."

"Yes, Mr. Dunn, I do. Are those certificates in the names of Mrs. Carteret and Mr. and Mrs. Fawcett three hundred and thirty-three shares apiece, while Mr. DiSilva's are three hundred and thirty-four?"

The detective inspected them and again added:

"Yes," said he. "What next?"

"You're wrong, Mr. Dunn."

"Wrong?"

"About the motive for killing Mr. Rodin."

"How so?"

"If the body wasn't robbed, and the open safe wasn't robbed."

"Mebbe you're right, Mr. Fawcett. But this here ain't no ordinary crime. As I said before, it's a Fourth Dimensional crime."

"What do you mean?"

"Any man—or woman—that could come into this here room," returned Joe Dunn, doggedly, "and pull off this here kind of a murder, and leave a dead man practically walled in, wouldn't have to be here at all to carry out a robbery. He could rob him, alive or dead, from miles away and nobody could know how it was being done."

For the first time since entering the room Mrs. Carteret showed signs of excitement.

"Why, Mr. Rodin said something like that last night," said she.

"Tell me what he said," replied the detective.

"He said somebody had been selling the stock short."

"What do you mean by 'short'?" asked the detective.

"It is this way," explained Mr. DiSilva. "The bears on the Stock Exchange have been raiding—that is, trying to depress the price—Jalisco mining stock. Every time they sold it short Mr. Rodin evidently bought it in. So, some bears are caught, for all the stock except a few shares is now either in that safe or downtown in the bank. That means that the bears will lose a lot of money——"

He stopped. His jaw sagged. He looked perturbed.

"What's wrong?" asked the detective.

"Land alive, man!" exploded Fawcett, "you're not wrong. You're right. The motive was robbery. When the news of Mr. Rodin's death gets out——"

"Wait a minit," said Joe Dunn. "I ain't told anybody about that yet."

Fawcett suddenly recovered his calm.

"Ah! That's different. You see, if the news got around the stock market among the brokers, for instance, that Mr. Rodin was dead—that he'd either been murdered or committed suicide—then there would probably be a big drop in the price of the stock. The syndicate might refuse to buy the stock, although they have money up on it. Then we would all stand to lose millions——"

"Not for the mine as a real mine," said Joe Dunn. "You go too fast for me, Mr. Fawcett. If the mine's as good as it is said to be, then if the syndicate backed down on its bargain it would be losing money and you folks that own the stock would be in all that money."

"That is partly true and party untrue."

"How?"

"Mexican conditions are unsettled. This British syndicate is in a very favorable position with the Mexican government. That is why we all decided to sell last night. That is why Mr. Rodin never planned to kill himself," returned Fawcett. "Man alive, he had ten millions to make on this deal! He always made millions. He thought in millions and he spent them, too, in mining."

"Thanks, Mr. Fawcett. Just one more question: Where did Mr. Rodin make his money before coming to Bluevale to live, if you know?"

"I've known him for twenty years. He never wanted his business known. He made his first big stake in Peru. That is Mr. DiSilva's country."

"That is true," said DiSilva; "he did. He became very wealthy. He had the touch of Crœsus. Everything he touched turned to gold. Such men make enemies, however."

"Somebody might have come up from Peru to kill him, you mean?" asked Joe Dunn.

DiSilva shrugged. "Who knows?" he asked. "According to what you have told us, right in this room where he was killed, some old grudge might have been the motive."

"I don't agree with that at all," said Fawcett. "I think some man that stood to lose or make a lot of money on the price of Jalisco mining stock today either killed Mr. Rodin or procured his death by a hired assassin. Look at the papers. There they are on the desk."

He pointed to the secretary-desk. Joe Dunn nodded.

"Go on, please," said he. "You mean somebody was short of that stock and if the news got out that Mr. Rodin was dead, the price would fall?"

"Exactly!" snapped Fawcett. "But according to you it hasn't got out."

"You're wrong, Mr. Fawcett. I merely told you that I hadn't given out the news. The news was out and it was in New York before I jimmied open that window and got into this room."

CHAPTER SEVEN

MORE MYSTERY

CLAUDE RODIN, the murdered man's nephew, stepped out of the group of people still in the room, composing Cynthia

Carteret, her mother and DiSilva and the Fawcetts.

"Mr. Dunn," said he, "will you please walk over this way and let me look closely at those gloves? I think I know who owns them."

Joe Dunn did so.

Claude Rodin did not wince, although he did grow very pale.

"Those are my gloves, Mr. Dunn," said he quietly, "but how they came to be in this room is beyond my knowledge."

"Where were you last night?" asked the detective.

"I went with Miss Cynthia Carteret for a drive in my uncle's roadster."

"Where did you go?"

"To Greenwich, Connecticut."

"You had tire trouble, I think you said?"

"I should have told the truth, sir."

"What is the truth?"

"Cynthia and I eloped and were married in Greenwich."

Mrs. Carteret gave a cry of dismay. Even Joe Dunn looked a bit nonplussed. He went on with his questions, however.

"You had an engagement with your uncle, you said, for last night?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you keep it?"

"I tried to keep it. I went to the library door when Cynthia and I came back, about twelve-thirty. I tried the door. It was locked. I knocked and spoke his name. He did not reply. Then I went to bed."

"Was Miss Carteret—beg pardon—your bride with you?"

"No, sir. She had already gone upstairs. You see, we wanted to keep our marriage a secret from my uncle for a few days."

"Why?"

"He was a bit put out because I had been spending too much money. I fancy he intended to give me a wigging last night."

"To give you a what?"

"A wigging—a scolding."

"Please all stay here," said Joe suddenly, "while I go out for a minute."

He left the room. He was gone for ten minutes.

"I've been in the kitchen," said he. "Mrs. Harvey says that breakfast is ready to be served. I wish you would all go in and eat. Claude, you go with the rest. There's one chance in your favor. I'm going to send these gloves down to police headquarters and have the fingerprint expert look at them."

DiSilva looked mildly interested.

"I thought you said, Mr. Dunn, that there were no fingerprints visible."

"I did say it. But I was referring to the room and the furniture, Mr. DiSilva. Claude has just one chance. If anybody else wore these gloves and committed this murder it may be that there is another set of fingerprints inside of the gloves besides his."

"Well," said Fawcett, "that's a new one on me, Mr. Dunn. I never heard of that before."

"Neither did I, Mr. Fawcett. If there is another set of fingerprints, then it shows that somebody besides Claude has worn the gloves to do the killing while he was up getting married. If there isn't—then Claude must have another talk with me."

"I won't run away, sir," said Claude.

"No," said Joe Dunn grimly, "you couldn't if you wanted to. I've had thirteen uniformed patrolmen around this estate ever since Doctor Hinchcliffe and I first photographed this body and before we removed it."

"Removed it?" echoed DiSilva. "What do you mean? I thought the body was under that sheet." He pointed toward it.

"Oh, I wanted everybody to think that," said Joe Dunn. "So I just spread the sheet over Mr. Rodin's derby hat and some books, and let that pair of slippers stick out of the other end of it. You see, this is a curious case. Somebody pulled a genu-wine Fourth Dimension killing. Suspicion now points directly to Claude. There's just two reasons why I don't take him to headquarters right now and lock him up. I'm not saying that I may not do that little thing later in the day."

"And what are they?" asked Cynthia Rodin, stepping forward and taking the arm of her youthful husband.

"One is that he spoke up and said the gloves were his. The other is that I never

yet heard of any man, young of old, who went to get married and the same night of his honeymoon killed a relative."

"But that's all nonsense, you know," said the girl, her dark eyes flashing her love and her defiance.

"Breakfast is waiting," smiled Joe Dunn. "After breakfast I'm going to know more than I know now. Better stick close to the house, all you folks. There's an army of reporters and photographers been pourin' up from New York all mornin'. The men patrollin' these here grounds is keepin' them out."

Fawcett frowned. "What are they here for? Who gave out this news?"

"There was some editor on the wire told me. You'll have to ask him," grinned Joe Dunn. His fleeting smile faded. "The man that told the editor was the man that killed Mr. Rodin, or else it was a pal of his."

"How do you make that out?" asked Fawcett.

"That's the last question I'm going to answer today," grimly returned the detective. "It's a cinch. Somebody knew he was killed before I did. And, accordin' to what you gentlemen explained about stocks, somebody's a-killin' in Jalisco Mining stock right now.

"The reporters," he continued, "is on the trail of the same mystery that I'm trailin'. The editors is headin' the mystery. The noosboys is roarin' it out on all the corners. The public is eatin' it up and rubbin' it in their hair. The public likes a mystery. Cops don't—I'm a cop.

"The reason I said to keep close to the house is that if you don't some of these wise cameramen will be photographin' yer mugg and stickin' it in the papers. They're smart boys, these cameramen. Some of them has got two sets of lens—a long focus that's a first cousin to a telescope, and a short focus for close-up pitchers. There's one of them up in a tree, just over the wall beyant. I can't drive him out of that tree, but I'm goin' to kape the hull lot of thim outa here until I know more than I do now."

"Come on, Claude, dear," said Cynthia, linking her arm in that of the suspect. She marched out with him as regally as if all detectives were silly old men, an opinion which the newly made bride certainly held of Joe Dunn.

Joe stood in the center of the room and dangled the glove.

"I've got to send these down," he said half-aloud. Then he went down the graveled yard to the front gate, where Mike Gilroy still sat as erect as a post on the former taxicab.

Joe talked to Mike and then gave him the gloves. Mike drove away. Jerry Todd "shooed" away a lot of newspapermen who tried to talk to the acting chief.

"Nothin' to say," grunted Joe, and walked back and around the house to the gardener. He found Jackson in the greenhouse.

"What time did you wet down the pansy-bed under the library windows last night?" asked the detective.

"About half-past seven, daylight-saving time, sir."

"At whose orders?"

"Mr. Rodin's, sir. He said the drought was affecting the flowers, and hereafter to water them late in the evening before I went home."

"Thanks." The detective left.

CHAPTER EIGHT

TURNED BACK

MEANWHILE, in the breakfast-room, Mrs. Carteret was almost in tears owing to her daughter's precipitancy in eloping to marry Claude Rodin and the latter's dilemma over owning the gloves with which the murder had been committed.

"Don't be silly, mother," said Cynthia, almost proudly. "Mr. Dunn may be an acting chief of police. He may arrest Claude. If he does, he will only have to explain that Fourth Dimension stuff. Mercy! Why, my plate is all black. Mrs. Harvey?"

The housekeeper came at the call.

"For mercy's sake!" she exclaimed. "Why, they're all black. Here, give them

to me. Just a minute. I'll have clean ones. I set them on the back of the gas-stove. The cook is in her room, saying her prayers. She thinks she's going to be arrested for killing Mr. Rodin, and the maid is sobbing her heart out. I have to do everything all alone."

She rushed out and rushed back with clean china. The guests all rubbed off the soot from their fingers on their napkins.

Then the meal proceeded. It was a rather sorry affair. Mrs. Fawcett could eat little because of the shock of Mr. Rodin's death.

The meal ended, Joe Dunn looked in at the door.

"Please come back into the library," said he.

They all went.

"I want to say just one word more," said the detective. "about this Fourth Dimension. This room has three dimensions. Length, breadth and thickness. The murderer of Guy Rodin had to use the Fourth Dimension, just as I've said. The Fourth Dimension is sometimes called time. It took time to plan this murder. The man who did it, for it was a man, I'm quite satisfied now, must have known Mr. Rodin's habits. The clock out there in the hall keeps track of time. The murderer left that room —and if any of you can tell me how he left it with the door locked and the windows locked inside—then you can have my job as acting chief of police of Bluevale. Are there any people here who want the job of finding the murderer?"

He was very solemn. There was no reply.

"I've sent down the gloves," went on Joe Dunn. "Soon's I hear from Headquarters on the telephone, and I oughta hear pretty quick, I'll have something to say to this young man here."

He nodded toward Claude Rodin. Cynthia clung to his arm. She was still defiant, still conscious of her husband's innocence, but the detective's grave air made her much more subdued.

"After that," went on Joe Dunn, "the reporters and cameramen 'll come bustin' in here. I suppose the rest of you folks 'll want to go. For police reasons, I don't want the servants to leave. The deestrict attorney 'll want to interview them. He takes charge after I leave here. So, if any of you want to go away, I'll let you take the little car—that yellow taxicab that I come up in. The driver is reliable. I know him. Just tell him where you want to go. I'll tell him who is comin', if you'll tell me who wants to go."

"I think Mrs. Fawcett and I will stay," said her husband. "The reporters will not come into the house, will they, if Mrs. Harvey asks them to keep out?"

"Mrs. Harvey'll have to come downtown later," said Joe. "and I can't keep thirteen cops off duty much longer. Even cops have to sleep."

"Well, mother can do as she pleases. If you arrest my husband I'm going with him," said Cynthia belligerently.

Mrs. Carteret announced that she would go with her daughter to the police station.

"Very well," said Joe. "And you, Mr. DiSilva?"

"I think I'll go back to New York," said he. "It is kind of you to allow me to use the cab."

"I'll tell Mike, the driver," said Joe. "Put your hat in front of your face before you get into the cab, or them cameramen'll like as not mugg you."

He left the room. He went to the gate and then came back. The phone rang. There was a terrible hush. The spirit of death seemed to be again descending.

Joe Dunn walked to the instrument.

"Hello! What's that? O. K. I'll call in my men and we'll all come down in the patrol wagon. Notify the District Attorney I'm coming in with the murderer!"

The ugly word rang through the room with a dismal dissonance.

Joe Dunn walked slowly back to the group. His step was firm but not brisk.

He looked at Claude Rodin.

"I'm sorry, my boy; I've got to take you to headquarters," said he. "Get your hat and coat. The rest of you can go. Mr. DiSilva, you better take the cab now. I may need to use it later myself."

The young man kissed his wife tenderly. He rose. He was pale but composed.

DiSilva left. He walked down the graveled path and entered the cab, looking at his watch.

"Take me to the station," said he. "I've only got a few minutes."

"O. K., boss. Don't pay any attention to that clock," said Mike. "This ain't a regular taxicab, you know, and the clock's crazy. You can pay me what you think the trip is worth. Chief Dunn said to take you down. You're Mr. DiSilva, ain't you?"

"Yes; please hurry."

"All right, boss; I'll step on her."

Mike did. He went down the hill like a wild man and then went spinning along the avenue like a wilder one. He dodged vehicles right and left. He pulled up after darting through an archway. He was in a court. It was walled in, all but the entrance. Mike popped off the box.

"Here you are, boss. Wasn't that a quick trip?"

DiSilva emerged and stared. "This isn't the railroad station," said he.

"Oh," said Mike, "I thought you wanted to come to the police station. You didn't say railroad station, did you?"

"Hurry," snapped DiSilva. He started to get into the cab again.

"Jest a minit, boss," said Mike. "I can't drive out while that patrol wagon is drivin' in with a prisoner, can I?"

It was even so. The patrol wagon stopped in the court entrance. Thirteen uniformed men popped out. They went inside. So did Detective Joe Dunn and Claude Rodin with his bride and her mother.

"This way, boss," said Mike. "We'll go through the buildin'. There's another cab in front outside. The reporters is following the patrol wagon."

DiSilva followed him. Mike led the way into the long hall.

He pointed to the doorway.

DiSilva handed him two dollars.

"Thanks, boss." Mike pocketed the money and turned into the room where the hum of voices sounded.

DiSilva walked to the entrance door and through it. Two patrolmen in uniform stopped him.

"You can't go out," said one.

"Why not?"

"Orders of Acting Chief Dunn," snapped the man. "Nobody goes out. There's been a murder."

"But he sent me out."

"Get him to pass you out."

DiSilva turned back.

CHAPTER NINE

WALLED IN

HE started to go into the room where Mike had gone.

Another patrolman in uniform outside the door stopped him.

"Keep out," said he.

"I want to see Acting Chief Dunn," said DiSilva. "I can't get out of the station-house."

"What's your name?"

He gave it.

"Wait a minit, sir; I'll speak to the Chief, if I can. He's busy. Mebbe he'll let you out through his office. The reporters——"

"I understand. Just give him my name, please."

The patrolman vanished. Then he reappeared and beckoned.

DiSilva followed him. He came into the room where Claude Rodin sat handcuffed. Next to him was Cynthia. Mrs. Carteret was with her daughter, and beyond sat Jackson, the gardener, and Harry Wiley, the chauffeur for the murdered man.

"Why, I thought you'd gone!" said Joe Dunn.

DiSilva explained him dilemma.

"Sit down a minit," said the police officer. "Things are getting pretty interesting. In one way I'm glad you ain't gone yet, for Harry Wiley, the chauffeur, just said he saw you early this morning walking down towards Pine Lake trolley station. Is that so?"

"Yes, sir. I wanted to send a telephone message. I went down and then came back to the house. What of it?"

Joe Dunn smiled.

He pointed toward the gloves on the table.

"What would you say if I was to tell you that your fingerprints is in them gloves, Mr. DiSilva, and on top of Claude's? Mike, take the cuffs off'n Claude. We've got the murderer!"

Mike Gilroy, former impromptu cabby, did as he was told. Cynthia gave a little cry of incredulous joy, kissed her husband and burst into tears of gratitude. Then the storm passed. She settled back in her chair and her eyes fairly devoured this rather old-ish man, whose language was as ungrammatical at times as his methods were baffingly simple and simply baffling.

He was Acting Police Chief Joe Dunn, and Cynthia wanted to kiss him, too, but didn't know just how he would receive the carcass in view of her former rather heated criticism of him and his methods.

DiSilva straightened himself. "Show me," said he coolly.

"Give me them prints," said Joe Dunn to Mike Gilroy. Mike complied. "Is them yourn?" asked the Acting Chief of police.

DiSilva looked at the enlarged photographs.

"Yes, sir," said he after inspecting his finger-ends carefully. "They are. But you didn't get them from the inside of those gloves. I see how you did get them. You got them from that black plate you handed me at breakfast. You framed me up—you and the housekeeper. You tried to fool me, eh? You expected to frighten me into a confession. Well, I don't fool easily, Acting Chief Dunn."

"Thanks," said Joe Dunn quietly. "Well, I'm glad you admitted they was your prints. I've got five witnesses to that right here. Look at the second print of your left hand. That must be yourn, too, since they all are, eh?"

"I have admitted the fact, and I've told you how you got them."

"So you did," chuckled Joe Dunn. The others were mystified. "I got 'em all the same way, not yourn alone. I suppose you'll say this print ain't yourn, too? Take your time—no hurry. It's the forefinger of your left hand. Same as the one I took off the breakfast plate. Look it over."

DiSilva paled. "I don't know. There's only part of it here."

"You said I couldn't fool you," said Joe Dunn. "Well, I did. I fooled you all this morning. I fooled you when I told you there was no *visible* fingerprints in that room. That was the truth; there wasn't one. But there was one that was *invisible*—the one you made when you went out of the room after shooting Mr. Rodin. And I fooled you by pretending to let you go scot free while I arrested an innocent boy. Even then you were walled in and never guessed it. That part of a fingerprint was on the door—the lock of the door—the bolt of the lock of the door, which was locked.

"You made that fingerprint, DiSilva—the only one you made. You throwed the left-hand glove under that secretary-desk after you shot poor Rodin through the left side of the head after he closed and locked that window. He opened the window to see if the gardener had watered the pansy-bed, as Mr. Rodin told Jackson here to do. You didn't know he had, but you come in that way, didn't you?"

The Peruvian recovered his aplomb.

"No, sir; you are mistaken. I was not in the room at all."

"You throwed off the right-hand glove after you turned the key in the locked door from the inside," went on Joe Dunn remorselessly, "and after you had opened the door and listened to see if anybody had heard the shot. Claude and his girl was comin' down from Greenwich. They didn't hear the shot. They wasn't there to hear it. Mr. and Mrs. Fawcett was both asleep. The room was shut like I said this morning. They didn't hear the report. Mrs. Harvey was in bed and asleep on the third floor, so she didn't hear it. Now, I'll tell you how you got out of that room and relocked the door from the outside without touching the key—a genu-wine Fourth Dimension stunt!"

His auditors leaned forward. This was real detective work, and of a very rare and high order. Joe Dunn had won their limit-

less respect. He had solved a profound mystery, as his next words showed.

"The door is old; it had shrunk away from the jamb. After you throwed the right-hand glove down towards the gun, you held the forefinger of your left hand against the end of the bolt in the lock. That was so's the lock wouldn't spring all the way over while you turned the key so's to lock it again. With your right hand you closed the door after steppin' out into the hall. You closed it quick. The lock, already halfways over, shot into the socket. I did it myself this morning, only from the inside, and after I'd photographed that print or had it protographed by Lieutenant Seaton, and with Doctor Hinchcliffe and Seaton watchin' me. It was a neat trick, but you didn't fool anybody with it."

DiSilva maintained his fatalistic calm.

"You are in error, sir. I can account for my fingerprint being on that bolt, now that you have shown that it was there—unquestionably there. It is very simple."

"Go ahead."

"I put my finger on that bolt and I distinctly remember the circumstance, now that you mention it, when I went in to talk with Mr. Rodin just after dinner. The door was unlocked and ajar. It opens from the left. I pushed it open that way."

"You must think I'm a Peruvian mummy," smiled Joe Dunn. "I got you all walled in. You're goin' to the 'lectric chair. 'Man alive,' as Mr. Fawcett says, you hain't got a chanst. Not one chanst to escape it. You're a good liar, though, I'll say that for you—one of the best I ever seen.

"You didn't know that the pansy-bed was freshly watered by Jackson. The print of your shoe is in it. You didn't know that Wiley, here, seen you sneakin' down to telephone to New York to somebody to git out the news that Mr. Rodin had committed suicide. You sent that message from the Pine Lake coin-box station. The New York police has been after that number. I told them to get it. It took them five hours to get it through the suburban traffic telephone superintendent.

"That's your broker's number. The police has found that you was short ten thousand shares of stock that you didn't own—Jalisco Mining Company stock. You stood to lose fifty dollars a share on that stock every day for the last thirty days. You was ruined unless the price went down. That was the motive for your shootin' Mr. Rodin—to spread the news that he was dead and bust up the syndicate sale, mebbe.

"You went in through that open window. You hid behind that secretary-desk, the only furniture in the room big enough to hide behind. You shot him. What's the use of lying? The white paint from the side of the house is on the toe of your shoe where your toe scratched it. I seen it this morning—the mark of your toe and the paint on your shoe. There's more paint on your trousers knee. Mike, take off them pants Mr. DiSilva is wearin'. I want 'em for evidence!"

He stopped. "Ladies, I beg your pardon. Please retire."

DiSilva was indicted. He escaped the electric chair because he hung himself in the county jail. He was "walled in" when he died as his victim had been.

LEADER IN JAIL BREAK IS BACK IN OLD CELL

H. DIGGS NOLAN, State and Federal prisoner and credited as the directing genius of the break from the Shelby, Tenn., county jail which gave forty men their liberty, was back behind the bars recently with six others of the escaped prisoners.

The rest of the jail breakers eluded a police dragnet spread over a radius of several hundred miles.

Nolan was taken into custody within a mile of the county jail seated in a taxicab in which he had been riding for several hours.

[This story was broadcast by WJZ]

Red Slade Saves a Hundred

By JOE BURKE

RED SLADE'S huge, hairy hand gripped the mesh-work of the steel enclosure about him, his bullet-head craned forward and his ratty eyes glared balefully at the venerable judge who pronounced the sentence of death.

"——And there you will be confined until between the hours of midnight, January 26, and four o'clock the following morning, when you will be taken to the prison yard, and there you will be hanged by the neck until you are dead! May the Lord, in His infinite goodness, have mercy on your soul."

Slade was then dragged away, snarling, fighting and emitting roars of vengeance on the heads of the convicting jury, judge and every officer of justice in general.

"I tell youse I didn't croak Mullen," he bellowed, straining and struggling to tear himself from the grasp of four stalwart officers. "I tell youse I didn't get a square——"

What Red Slade didn't get, in his own thinking, was choked off by his huge body being literally pitched headlong into a prison van and the door padlocked after him.

Red was incarcerated, assigned to a cell in murderer's row, and a week before the date set for the execution was put under guard.

He had been a sullen prisoner, snarling curses at those who addressed him, and on several occasions attempted to assault his keepers. Several times he had been sent to the prison hospital to get patched up after some of his outbreaks, and none of the guards were sorry when Red was placed in the death cell, to remain there and mull over his ill-spent past until he was taken out to look for the last time on Mother Earth.

Guard Simmons glanced at his watch and noted the time. "Quarter to ten," he muttered, shoving it back into his waistcoat pocket and peering in the cell at his charge. He then eased his bulky form back in the chair, assured that the doomed man was seemingly sleeping.

Six days later a low moan came from within the death cell.

"What's the matter wid ya?" growled Guard Simmons, centering his flashlight on the figure on the cot. "Got a pain?"

Another moan, louder and more pitiful, was the only response from the doomed man, who twisted his body until his face was in focus of the guard's shaft of light. Simmons started back with a cry of alarm. Red's mouth was open and froth was oozing from his lips.

"Poison!" breathed Simmons, the flashlight nearly falling from his hand. Then he made a fatal error. He was not a seasoned guard, having only been on the job a few months. A more experienced man would have summoned help. Simmons forgot rules and regulations at that moment; his only thought was that his charge had taken poison, and prompt action was necessary to save him. With trembling fingers he unlocked the heavy steel door and sprang to the prostrate man's side.

"Whatcha done, Slade?" he cried, leaning over the moaning figure on the bed. "Whatcha take?"

Like uncoiled giant steel springs two brawny arms shot out, knocking Simmons senseless. Red bound and gagged him.

With a wry face the crook spat from his foaming mouth a piece of yellow soap. He grinned in the semi-gloom as he hurriedly

divested his victim of his uniform and pulled the clothes over his prison garb.

"Th' big dub's about my size, too," he ruminated, lifting the body from the stone floor and covering it up on the cot he had just vacated. "Now t' make a get-away from de other screws."

Armed with the guard's keys, loaded revolver and his plans all laid, Red Slade got out in the yard, over the wall and went floundering through the everglades in his break for freedom. Twenty minutes later the escape was discovered and a chase was on. The Middleville State prison was not equipped with modern radio or searchlight; they depended wholly on telephone and a large bell on the east wall.

Snow clouds which had been gathering all day let loose ermine flakes, and soon the shrieking wind rose high above the resonant peal of the warning bell.

Red Slade never ceased his bold dash till he reached the rim of a swamp. The storm had reached its zenith. With fury the whirling flakes lashed the fugitive's face, blinding his eyes until, in his rage against the elements, Slade covered his eyes with his huge hands and plunged to the ground at the foot of a drooping willow. For several minutes he crouched there gasping, spent. No longer could he hear that cursed bell. With numbed fingers he searched for and found a match. He lighted it, and with cupped hand breaking the wind and snow, with his free hand he brought forth the guard's heavy gold Elgin.

" 'Leven-twenty-five," he muttered between swollen lips, hurling the match from him and pocketing the watch. "I wonder where I'm headed for?"

Red Slade was fleeing through a country that was entirely new to him. He had only been in the South five days when he was caught in the act of robbing the Munroe County Bank by Sheriff Mullen, whom he had shot before he was captured by a posse.

The fugitive's struggles through the ooze and rank growth of a swamp had nearly taxed his great strength to the limit. He presently struggled to his feet and swayed, as he tried to breast the wind and swirling flakes. Like a ship without a rudder, the fugitive was void of any sense of direction. He was a dangerous derelict.

Another hour or more found Slade standing at four cross-roads, peering through bloodshot eyes at a careening sign-post. After many trials his scant supply of matches had decreased alarmingly, but Red finally spelled out the word "Culvertown to the north."

"Culvertown," he read. "Dat's de burg I'll hike fer. A bird in stir tol' me dere's good pickin' dere, an' a chance t' get a rattler out."

The road to Culvertown was ankle-deep with snow. He still wore the murdered guard's uniform over his prison habiliment, and as the traveling grew heavier the burden of the extra clothes was slowly impeding his flight. He stopped and searched with red-lidded eyes for a shelter, that he could divest himself of the hated prison stripes and dress in the blue uniform. But his sweeping search was in vain. Muttering imprecations upon the storm and the world in general, Red Slade resumed his flight.

He had hardly taken a dozen steps when from out of the cloud of snow came a queer sound. The fugitive halted and craned his bullet-head in the direction whence it came. With numbed fingers he yanked out the guard's gun and awaited the new danger. The head-lights and dark outlines of an automobile came out of the storm.

The fugitive breathed easier, pocketed the revolver and plowed his way to a nearby tree where he hid behind its friendly trunk.

On came the automobile, laboring and struggling like a thing of life. Red's eyes narrowed as he watched its slow approach. At the sign-post the car stopped with a jerk. A curtain on the right of the driver's seat parted gingerly and a man stepped down on the running-board. The watcher heard him ejaculate "Ah!" as he parted the curtain as if to enter, then he stopped. He was staring down at the snow-covered road looking at the escaped convict's footprints.

The next instant Red Slade's mind was made up. He emerged from his hiding-place and carefully picked his way through the snow until he got behind the man.

"Claw fo' de sky, bo," he snarled, prodding the muffled-up form with the revolver. "Turn 'round here till I gives yer de up an' down."

With a low gasp the figure turned with hands elevated. Red Slade sized up his new victim.

The man confronting him was seemingly of middle age. He was tall, with stooping shoulders.

"Where yer headed for, brother?" demanded Red, emphasizing the peremptory request with a jab of the menacing gun.

"I'm going to Middleville," came the answer from between the folds of the turned-up overcoat collar. "What's the idea of this hold-up? Who are you, and what do you want?"

Red Slade laughed mirthlessly.

"Not t-night, brother. You're goin' to Culvertown," he exclaimed. "What's yer business in Middleville, eh? Lookin' fer some one?"

The other shook his head, his eyes fixed steadily on his captor.

"My business there, sir," he said in the same low tone, "is of the greatest importance. You must not delay me, as my time is limited. Are you a constable, may I ask? Your uniform denotes one."

"Never mind what I am," snapped the fugitive, "you're gonna drive me to Culvertown. Get that? Keep dem mitts up till I frisk yer."

An adept by virtue of his profession, Red did a clean job in a very short time. When from an inside pocket he drew forth a black silk mask he uttered a howl.

"Well, what de yer know 'bout that!" he bellowed. "Me thinkin' yer were a psalm shouter or a sawbones, and findin' yer a gun ther same as meself! P'ut it there, ole-timer! What's yer monniker? What's de lay in Middleville? Don't ya know there's a pen in that burg?"

The other, who had been protesting at the outrage, was somewhat startled at the fugitive's change of manner. His glance dropped from Red's face to the outstretched hand, then back to the face again.

"Why—why, I don't understand," he began. "I——"

"Ah, can that chatter," Red snarlingly interjected. "Don't try ter kid me! Whatcha totin' these fer if yer ain't a gun—eh?"

The fugitive drew from his pocket a formidable-looking automatic, a bunch of keys and, along with the black silk mask, shoved them under the other's nose.

"Ye ain't even a real gun," he sneered. "Yer a cheap flat worker. Get in there an' turn dis gas-buggy's nose t'wards Culvertown. Dere's good pickin' in dat burg. Line up wid a *real* gun—dat's me! Get in!"

"But I tell——"

"Shut up, or I'll crown you!" hissed Red, raising the automatic. "Get in there."

The other parted the curtain at the driver's seat and planted a snow-covered foot on the running-board. There he paused for a split-second and turned his face full on his captor. His lips were parted in a broad grin now. Red's eyes narrowed. His brutal visage relaxed. He, too, grinned.

"Get it off yer chest, bo," Red Slade suggested, alert and watchful. "Why de pleasure map?"

"You're a wise bird, old topper," said the stranger from the corner of a distorted mouth. "Couldn't put one over on you, could I? What's your monniker, an' when didya crush out?"

"What d'ya know about a crush-out?" asked Red hoarsely, a deadly menace in the question. "If you're a dick you'd better pray, 'cause I'm goin' to croak ya."

Unruffled, the other bared his teeth. He never wavered under the frowning bore of the menacing weapon, but nodded his head and spat disgustedly.

"An' you say you're a *real* gun," he sneered. "You're a flat tire. Didn't ya frisk me and clean me out? Did ya find anything on me that looked like a dick's outfit? Go back ter de pen wid de rest of de dead ones! Dere's crape hangin' on your ears, an' you don't know it."

The scathing rebuke rather stunned the fugitive for an instant. Instead of the expected outburst of rage and a volley of shots—as would naturally be expected—Red Slade lowered his gun and looked at his victim.

"I've croaked guys fer less than dat, brother," hinted Red, "but I guess I'm mistaken. Shake!"

Captive and captor's hands met in a hearty handshake.

"You're on, partner," grinned the motorist. "Now hop in an' we'll buck de drifts to Middleville. Dere's a good lay dere an' I'll hafta pull it off before daylight."

But Red Slade didn't hop aboard—not then, anyhow.

"Nothin' doin' on that burg," he said with blunt conclusiveness. "I just beat dat pen. Was doin' a five-stretch fer a stick-up. Let's flivver to Culvertown. We'll pull a job an' split fifty-fifty. Den I'll hop a rattler for de East. You can pull dat job in Middleville some other night."

"All right," assented the stranger, and they rode away.

"It's a big stake, eh? What's yer handle?" said the motorist.

"Never mind my handle, bo; just call me Bill."

Neither spoke as the car plowed its way through the many drifts. At spots laid bare by the wind the over-worked engine animated into a staccato, faltering roar, only to sink to a moan as it bucked and spun in another giant snowdrift.

"What's de matter?" growled Red Slade. He had been drowsing slightly, and his bullet head had nearly shattered the windshield on account of a sudden stop.

"Something ahead in the road," said the other. "Looks like something big blockin' de way. "There's a steep cliff on one side and a forest on the other."

With many grunts and curses the two men, so strangely thrown together, alighted to investigate.

Red Slade flew into a rage at what he saw. Blocking the road entirely was a fallen tree.

"What will we do now?" he asked, turning to the other who was gazing at the obstruction. "Ain't dere no way we can get by?"

The motorist shook his head and remarked quietly:

"Dat flivver of mine is a good puddle jumper and drift bucker, but I think it draws de line on vaultin' trees. Dere's a road to the right through the woods—if you're game for it—that'll land us in Culvertown. Get in an' we'll make a try."

Red Slade shot the speaker a look of mistrust.

"All right, bo," he growled. "Hop to it. And," he went on, grasping the other's arm in a grip of steel, "get dis into your dome, an' get it right: I've gotta take a chance wid yer, but if yer double-cross me—well, dere won't be any snow where I'll send yer. Let that sink in."

The road to the right was followed.

"What's dat burg ahead?" Red asked his companion presently. "Looks like a town."

"Dat," informed the other, staring straight ahead and advancing the gas, "dat's Culvertown. What time is it?"

Grumbling, Red Slade drew out the motorist's watch, which was nearest at hand. Lighting a match, he noted the time.

"Quarter after three."

"Fine!" mumbled the other as the car shot ahead. "We'll hit it up for a while."

And hit it up he did. Rocking, plunging, the car sped on. Drifts were encountered and vanquished.

"Pull up!" Red yelled suddenly. "Pull up, or I'll blow yer head off yer shoulders! Dis ain't Culvertown. Dis is Middleville, an' dat's de pen over there! You double-crossed me, and you'll never take me in."

The rest ended in a cry of mingled rage and terror. The driver, by a quick motion of his arm, knocked up the menacing revolver, and without pulling down speed, plunged through the side curtain and landed in a snowbank as a bullet whined over his head. The car, shorn of its guiding hand, swung sharply to one side and plunged over an embankment.

The motorist was up in an instant, and without waiting to learn what befell his late passenger, hurried towards a somber stone building some fifty or more yards away.

After a while Red Slade groaned and opened his eyes. He blinked as a shaft of light focused on his face. Voices—well remembered voices—greeted his awakening.

He groaned again as he tried to raise his hands to his face. Handcuffed! Then rough fingers clutched his shoulder and he was yanked to his feet.

"Welcome to our city, Red," said the sheriff grimly. "You thought to cheat the law, did you? But it can't be done. It's twenty minutes to four now, and we just have time to fit you out with a black suit and send you to the chair, as per schedule."

Fifteen minutes later Red Slade, walking between two guards and followed by a priest chanting a prayer for the condemned man's soul, mounted the gallows. As he stood on the trap his hands were secured behind his back. Before adjusting the black cap over his head the sheriff asked the doomed man the usual question:

"Do you care to say anything before the sentence of the law has been carried out, Slade?"

"Defiant, but white to the lips, the murderer nodded his head. His ratty eyes swept the small group below him. He scanned their faces one by one. Then he looked again at the sheriff.

"Dere's one thing I'd like to know, sheriff, before I kick out," Red mumbled in a strained voice. "I'd like to know who's de bird dat brung me back?"

"The County Executioner," said the sheriff." We pay him $100 for every man he hangs and you've saved his fee!"

A COUNTERFEIT TRAIL

FOR their persistence and success in tracing a pair of negro counterfeiters through a number of States and finally capturing one of them, Secret Service Agents Robert L. Godby and James J. Garvey, attached to the Treasury Department office in the Custom House, received commendation from the department at Washington.

Their prisoner, George Forman, 22 years old, of 213 Grand street, Jersey City, was arrested in Brooklyn after he had passed a bogus note on a 70-year-old pushcart man. The negro waived examination before Federal Commissioner Rasquin in Brooklyn and was held in $20,000 bail for the Grand Jury. The Secret Service agents said he confessed and gave them information about his accomplices.

Wherever the negroes operated, said the agents, they left a trail of raised notes, passed, for the most part, on pushcart peddlers or fruit store keepers. The pair had been working through a number of cities for three months, obtaining thousands of dollars.

Forman said that until three months ago he was a laborer. Then, he said, according to the agents, he decided that it was too irksome to gain a livelihood by manual labor. He said he had given much thought to the possibility of raising small notes and after consultation with the other negro decided to try counterfeiting, both being artists with the pen.

They obtained special inks and tried their finished product on pushcart peddlers, succeeding so well that thereafter they centered on the pushcart men whenever possible, thinking the ignorance of the peddlers would make the work easier. Their method was to scrape the number and ink in higher ones, raising $5 to $20 and $1 to $10.

Godby and Garvey were standing at Prince street and Myrtle avenue, Brooklyn, when they saw Forman buy a half dozen pears from Guiseppe Viglia, an old pushcart man. They saw Forman offer a $20 bill and receive change. Then they seized him. Viglia said that twice previously in the past few days a negro had given him a large bill for pears. He produced two other counterfeit bills besides the one just given him by Forman, not knowing until then that he had been victimized. Viglia said that he worked five months a year gathering funds for the winter. He said that he now had saved $60, of which $50 had been given in change for counterfeit bills.

In the negro's room the agents found a complete outfit for counterfeiting.

The Seventh Glass

By CHARLES M. GREEN

PART ONE

HARTLEY HEDGES, his impulsive, boyish face quivering with emotion, pleaded with his friend.

"Doctor, can't you think of some way to bring her to time. She's just obstinate and high-tempered. She got on her 'high-horse' over nothing at all, and now she won't back down on account of her pride. I've got to do something right away or I'll never be able to win her back."

"Hang it, man, I know she loves me just as much as I do her; but if she ever gets set she'll marry somebody else just to show me that she won't give in. It's a case of kill or cure now, and I've got to get her over her silly pride within the next day or two or lose her forever."

Dr. Merton Aldrich, his friend and companion, one of the most skilful surgeons of the younger school and a psychologist of note, sat in meditation.

When he spoke his tones were thin, colorless but precise, his language well chosen and formal.

"I agree with your diagnosis of Vera's character, Hartley. Your engagement has been broken and she is the type to marry in haste in order to keep from you the satisfaction of knowing her heart is broken."

Hartley waited expectantly. He knew his friend well enough to know there was more coming.

Nor was he disappointed. After a minute the doctor continued:

"I am inclined to think your only hope is to subject her mind to some shock so great that the really trivial grievance she now holds will be relegated to the background, and she will have betrayed her real love for you before she realizes what she has done."

"How can it be done?"

"I would suggest that you write her a note, stating that you have decided to commit suicide because she refuses to renew the engagement. As your friend and hers, and also as your medical adviser, I will go to her with this note, telling her I found it on my desk where you had left it; that when I last saw you you talked wildly and irrationally, and that I fear you have carried out your threat. This will probably so upset her that she will forget entirely your quarrel and make a frenzied search for you, seeking to prevent your suicide before it is too late."

As Doctor Aldrich finished speaking, he raised his glance for one brief second, with just a flicker of the cold, watery eyes. Upon the face of Hartley Hedges was an expression of eager acquiescence.

"By George, that's fine. You've got the idea. Why didn't I think of it before? Vera's father did more than leave her an immense fortune; he left her a will and a power to reach decisions which most men haven't got."

The doctor nodded, a very dignified, precise nod of silent affirmation.

"She must never be allowed to think that there was any pretense in connection with that note, either when it is received or afterward," he said.

"Trust me for that," assented Hartley. "Give me a piece of paper and a pen and I'll write that note at once. It's the only chance, and I sure appreciate your suggestion, old man."

He gathered the paper and pen to him

with the impulsive enthusiasm of vibrant youth.

As he wrote rapidly and spontaneously, Doctor Aldrich busied himself at the instrument case which stood against the wall of his office. His back was turned toward the writer, whose eyes remained fastened upon the sheet of paper.

As Hedges finished writing, Doctor Aldrich returned to the little table and extended a thin, white hand for the note. In an emotionless voice he read aloud:

"My dear friend and Doctor: As I told you earlier in the evening, I feel that it is hopeless to expect Vera to relent. My life has been shattered, the world can never be the same and I feel that it is better that I end it all. When you receive this note I will probably have terminated an existence which can only be a burden if faced without the girl I love. Thank's for all you have done for me. Your affectionate friend.

(Signed) "HARTLEY HEDGES."

Having finished reading, Doctor Aldrich studied the missive for a few moments. Seemingly he was making absolutely certain that the paper expressed the sentiment he had suggested. Nor did the action seem out of keeping with his character. It was to be presumed that he never made a mistake, always acted with cool deliberation, always remained master of events.

The paper apparently meeting his approval, he placed it face down on the little table and moved over to Hartley's side. The thin, pale hand with its long, attenuated fingers startlingly white as it rested for a moment on the shoulder of Hartley's coat, and then Hedges jumped back with an exclamation of pain.

The needle of a hypodermic-syringe had been dexterously inserted through the coat and into the skin at the back of his neck. As he jumped away the hypodermic was exposed plainly in the hand of the physician.

Hartley's face showed surprise, bewilderment, but no annoyance. His trust of his friend was too complete, his devotion too deep for rage, but he was puzzled and just a trifle nettled.

"For Heaven's sake! What's the big idea?" he exclaimed. "Wasn't that a hypodermic you gave me?"

Doctor Aldrich made no reply. Gently and carefully laying the hypodermic on the table, he picked up the suicide note and again studied it with that careful attention to detail which one gives to a document which is of the utmost importance.

An expression of wild incredulity came upon the features of Hartley Hedges. Amazement, suspicion and apprehension registered in turn upon his startled features; then he made a rush toward the physician.

Doctor Aldrich paid no heed to the figure hurrying toward him. His attention was plainly fastened entirely upon the note. He had dismissed the other entirely and completely from his mind.

Midway in his rush Hartley faltered in his stride. He swept his hand before his eyes as though attempting to brush aside a thick mist. He stopped, lurched staggeringly on his feet, and fell to the floor.

As the body collapsed with a crash, Doctor Aldrich smiled grim approval and satisfaction at a task well accomplished. He folded the note, using great care to see that the folds were neat and accurate. Then he placed the missive in his breast pocket and turned to the body on the floor.

PART TWO

WHEN Hartley Hedges regained consciousness he found that he was bound to a narrow cot in a small room in which there were no windows. The only illumination came from a small electric globe in the ceiling. The room, he noticed, was devoid of furniture with the exception of the cot and a narrow shelf, upon which were arranged, with mathematical precision, seven ordinary glasses, each about two-thirds full of what appeared to be water.

He was conscious of a dull throbbing in his head, a pain so mastering as to cause an intense stab of agony when he attempted to move. In his hand was placed a small pear-shaped wooden shell, at one end of

which was located a hard-rubber button. From the other end an electric cord ran to the wall of the room.

For some moments his numbed faculties speculated upon the nature of the device, and then he recognized that it was an electric signal such as hospital patients are given with which to summon a nurse.

As the fog of oblivion began to dispel, Hartley endeavored to reconstruct the events of his last moments of consciousness.

The shelf was still there. The seven glasses of water were arranged with the same precision, and the reflection of the light in the ceiling glinted and scintillated from the polished sides of the glasses with a suggestion of cool refreshment.

Hedges raised his head with an effort and inspected his bonds. Then he pressed the button of the buzzer which was still held in his hand.

Somewhere beyond the walls of the room he could faintly hear the harsh bur-r-r of the signal. The walls, he reflected, could not be very thick, since they transmitted sound so easily. The door of the room, he surmised, must be at the end and back of his head. The other walls he could see, and there was no sign of a door which he could detect.

Five minutes passed without the slightest sound of footsteps. Again he pressed the button of the signal. Again he heard the answering bur-r-r of the buzzer in the indefinite outside space. Again he waited.

He felt his mind clearing rapidly now. The pain in his head was leaving, and in its place was the agony of intense thirst.

He closed his eyes, striving to recollect just how he happened to be lying bound to this cot in a strange room. Bit by bit he was able to recall the events of his last hour of consciousness. With a start he thought of the suicide note, the hypodermic.

Then, suddenly and purely as the result of some mental intuition, he knew that he was not alone. There had been no sound, no door had been heard to open in that narrow chamber, no footstep had sounded on the floor, and yet——

He opened his eyes and beheld Doctor Aldrich standing by the side of the cot. His pale, gray eyes looking as emotionless as ever, his thin, straw-colored hair carefully and precisely parted. So emotionless did he seem that Hartley felt for a moment the physician was there in his professional capacity, to minister to the sufferings of the sick man.

Then Hartley recollected that hypodermic, the expression of abstract concentration on the face of the physician as he had examined the suicide note.

By an effort Hartley controlled himself.

"Well?" he inquired thickly.

Doctor Aldrich wasted no time in getting to the point.

"I regret very much, Hartley, that my own success demands that you be sacrificed. As you are doubtless aware, I never allow any obstacle to interfere with my progress.

"Unfortunately, I have been financially embarrassed for some time. I realized that it was necessary for me to contract an advantageous marriage, and to do so without any delay. Such things are not arranged in a fortnight, and I had only one alternative.

"Vera was the only woman I knew who possessed the necessary financial qualifications, and with whom I was sufficiently well acquainted to make a proposal of marriage seem not entirely out of place. I had been watching the progress of your courtship and, through my knowledge of psychology, realized that there was only one way by which I could hope to attain success."

Hartley, having recollected the events leading up to the writing of the suicide note, and the selfish duplicity of his trusted friend, set his face in a mask of immobility, through which there came no flicker of expression. For all the emotion he allowed to be depicted on his countenance, he might have been a figure carved from wood.

The doctor resumed:

"Knowing that Vera would marry almost any one to spite you, in the event of a quarrel, I used my position as your mutual friend to bring about such a quarrel. I am frank to confess that I have enjoyed our friendship, and I give you my word I would

not have resorted to these means had they not been necessary.

"Not until I had firmly convinced myself that my success required your removal did I determine on your death. I felt that Vera would probably accept me following your quarrel, in order to spite you; but I did not make the mistake of underestimating your intelligence. I knew that you would put two and two together as soon as the engagement was announced, and realize that I had deliberately brought about the quarrel. I also knew that you would prove resourceful enough to communicate your suspicions to Vera, and that she would welcome the opportunity to effect a reconciliation once she was convinced of my intentions.

"It therefore became necessary that I should get you out of the way while I persuaded Vera to marry me to spite you, and that, after having secured her promise, I would bring about your death. Having determined on this course, I flatter myself that I handled matters rather artistically."

"You scoundrel!"

"You will remember how I used my knowledge of psychology to secure the note in your own handwriting, stating you had decided to commit suicide. After that it only remained for me to drug you and remove you to this room. Here you will stay for a day or two, during which time I will secure Vera's promise to marry me."

"She'll never——"

"Oh, no, you needn't doubt my ability to do that. I will relate with reluctance an imaginary conversation with you, and which I have already carefully thought out. She will jump at the opportunity to marry your 'best friend' in order to convince you that you were less than nothing in her life.

"However, I digress, which is a dangerous habit. Having secured her promise, I will arrange your death by the method I am about to explain, and at the proper time produce your body. You will remember you have long had a key to my private office. The room in which you now are is a secret chamber opening from a corridor back of my private office."

"You'll pay for this!"

"At the proper time I have only to produce your body in my office, with this note folded on the table near by, and the unmistakable evidence of poison in your stomach. A coroner's jury will return a verdict of suicide while mentally deranged."

Hartley Hedges closed his eyes, and Doctor Aldrich smiled.

"I admire your self-control, Hartley. I am sorry it has become necessary to bring about your death. However, to get down to brass tacks: There are seven glasses of water on the shelf. One of those glasses contains, dissolved in the water, a deadly cyanide preparation, so potent that the slightest drop on the tongue, or even on the lips, will produce almost instant death.

"I am leaving you alone in this room. I have brought you a little food, but you will have no water other than what is in those glasses. I don't want you to die before I am ready, so I will tell you that the glasses on either end contain pure water. Of the other five, one is deadly poison, and the other four contain water.

"I am going to give you a good drink now, which will last you about twelve hours; at the end of that time you will consume, roughly speaking, one of the glasses of water every twenty-four hours. As I have indicated two of the glasses which contain pure water, it is reasonable to suppose that you will continue to live for the next forty-eight hours. By that time I shall have Vera's promise. After that I don't care when you die. I shall take a look at you every day through a secret peep-hole in the wall. When you partake of the fatal glass I will simply move you into the other room and notify the coroner."

Hartley groaned.

"I am simply leaving you with the seven glasses so that you may have something to occupy your mind, and a little game you may play each day, a little gamble with death. Now you may have a good cooling drink of water."

Unhesitatingly Hedges raised the pitcher Doctor Aldrich put to his lips. The cooling water brought relief to his fevered throat. Almost instantly he realized that the water had been drugged, but he made

no effort to fight the effects of the medicine and almost immediately dropped to sleep.

When he awoke the bonds had been removed and he was free to explore his prison. Strange to say, he awoke with complete memory and almost no feeling of sickness as a result of the double drugging he had undergone. Beyond an acute thirst he felt no ill effects.

Neither did he feel any fear. Somehow or other he felt he would find a way of outwitting the maniac who had imprisoned him. By this time he felt no doubt whatever that Doctor Aldrich had become insane.

An inspection of the room showed that it was apparently built on the end of a corridor. The walls were paneled, with no trace of an entrance of any kind. Hartley was certain one of the panels could be made to slide back by proper manipulation, and that the action was easy and free, for in no other way could he account for the noiseless entrance of the physician; but he felt equally certain there was some locking arrangement by which the panel could be firmly locked in place from the outside.

A small basket of food lay on the floor beside the cot. He still wore his street clothes, but his watch, keys, pencil and all other belongings had been carefully removed. He had no doubt Doctor Aldrich had these articles ready to put back in the pockets of his clothes after he should have taken charge of the "body."

Hartley laughed, a short, grim laugh. He had the spirit of a fighter, and he did not intend to give up the struggle. Not yet a while.

The seven glasses of water were still arranged on the shelf. He was desperately thirsty, and he had no doubt the physician had told the truth when he said the two glasses on the ends were perfectly safe for drinking; but he did not intend to cut down his precious supply of water until he had to.

Doctor Aldrich had said, he remembered, that the room was in the building with his office, and not far removed from the private office. Hartley determined to shout for help. The electric buzzer had been removed, but he remembered how plainly he had been able to hear the distant bur-r-r of the signal when he had pressed the button. If the walls were that thin, there was a chance he could attract attention.

He shouted long and loud, then listened for a response. The echoes of his voice rang from the narrow walls of the room, but there was no other sound. He then tried beating on the panels of the wall, and finally throwing his weight against them. He tried this until he had bruised his shoulders, but he was unable to make any impression upon the walls.

His efforts made him desperately thirsty, and he finally approached the shelf where the glasses were arranged and took a small drink from the glass nearest the end on the left-hand side. As he did so he inspected the remaining glasses with interest. They all looked alike, and he could detect no difference in the coloring of the contents, nor could he see any precipitate in any of the glasses.

It was a great temptation to satisfy his thirst and to drink down the entire glass of water which he held in his hand, but by an effort of will he succeeded in taking only about one-half of the contents. The water was warm and insipid, and did but little toward quenching his thirst.

Hartley had no way of knowing whether it was day or night. Because of the absence of sound he became convinced it was night. He lay down on the cot, and after an hour dropped off to sleep.

Somehow he knew when he awoke that it was daytime. There was just the faintest suspicion of a throb of sound in the air of his prison. He judged that the elevators in the office building were making a vibration of sound which penetrated to the room. He revised his opinion of the thickness of the walls. He reflected that there was probably only one section of the wall where the panels did not fit snugly against the solid walls of the building. It must have been through this portion of the paneling he had heard the sound of the electric buzzer.

Then he remembered that there had been a little closet in the back of Doctor Aldrich's private office, in which nothing was stored, but in which no one except the

physician was ever allowed. He surmised that the back of that closet must contain the secret panel which served as an entrance to his prison. When any one was in the closet it might be possible to hear sounds from the prison, but when the closet door was closed he was completely isolated.

Somehow the day wore on. He was too thirsty to eat, and he husbanded his supply of water. Much to his surprise he felt no panic, no fear. He remained cool and calm. It was too absurd to think he would be allowed to perish in the midst of a twentieth century civilization, locked in a modern office building, and to die in so bizarre a fashion.

In the afternoon his tongue commenced to swell, and it became necessary for him to finish the first glass of water. Even then the agony of thirst was acute. As the throbbing sounds ceased, he composed himself for sleep, but was unable to secure any rest. From time to time he would drop off, only to be troubled with hideous nightmares. He would arouse with a start, only to find the same room, the same small electric light and the same array of glasses on the narrow shelf.

He now began to experience serious trouble with his tongue. The second glass of water was finished. He had noticed a fly buzzing aimlessly around the electric light, and once he had seen it descend to one of the water glasses for a drink. He thought it had been the third glass from the right, but he was not sure. He determined to try that next.

His thirst ceased to be a distinct sensation, but became a great pulsing agony. His tongue had become so swollen that he could not shout. In a burst of desperation he seized the third glass from the end and drained it. By this time he had lost track of time. The throbbing of his head was so acute that he could not detect the vibration of the elevators. The electric light blazed down pitilessly, time seemed to have merged into an eternity. He was delirious much of the time, and yet, with the dogged will-power of brute determination, he husbanded the water supply.

Then he noticed that the fly was dead. It was impossible to tell whether it had fallen from the fourth glass or the fifth, but there it was, midway between the two glasses.

Hartley laughed—the grimace of delirium. Seizing the glasses, he drained them all—all except the fourth and fifth. The water cooled and sobered him. He staggered to the bed and dropped to sleep.

Upon regaining consciousness, he realized that his chances of life had narrowed to an even gamble with death. His tongue had again thickened and protruded from his mouth. All of the glasses except two were empty.

He approached the shelf. No longer did he retain his courage. Existence in the room had become a veritable hell—a cramped hell in which he was tortured for water, and in which an electric light blazed down with merciless and pitiless intensity.

He stood looking at the glasses. He knew he must make a decision. He almost hoped that he would taste the swift relief of death. He reached out his hand——

And then, suddenly, he heard the voice of Doctor Aldrich, somewhat muffled, but still quite distinct. Apparently the door had been opened into the closet, and also it was equally apparent that some ventilation system communicated with the closet from the prison. The doctor's voice swelled in volume as though the door had been opened while he was talking. It was plain from his tone that he was annoyed.

"Really, Vera, it is most inopportune of you to come at this time, and to insist on entering this closet. As you can plainly see, there is nothing concealed here. Now, if you will be so good as to come out——"

It appeared, however, that Vera was not going to be so good as to come out. Her voice was shrill with excitement.

"This is exactly like the closet I saw in my dream. I am sure that somewhere, somehow, Hartley wanted me to come here. Oh, dear, I do wish I could only get the message he was trying to give me in that dream."

"Nonsense," cut in Doctor Aldrich. "As your physician, and friend, I prescribe im-

mediate rest and a change of scene. I insist on your going to your home at once. Come."

At this point another voice, a heavy, masculine voice, took part in the conversation.

"Really, Miss Powell, there don't seem to be nothin' here. I came along to see fair play, but there ain't nothin' to be done here. If you'll just excuse me, I'll be gettin' back on my beat."

"I'm certain Hartley was trying to tell me something about this closet," came again in Vera's voice, but Hartley noticed there was less assurance in her tone. She was apparently leaving the closet.

During all of this time he had stood there, hardly believing his ears. It was as though a man imprisoned in a tomb had suddenly heard the voice of his loved one.

And then he awoke to the fact that his last possible hope of escape was being taken away. He tried to shout, but no sound came from the swollen throat. In an agony of helplessness he felt his last chance at life slipping through his fingers. Then, moved by instinct, he staggered to the far side of the room and commenced to pound on the panel.

Instantly commotion reigned in the closet. All three of the voices began to shout, there came the sound of a heavy crash against the wall of his prison. The policeman was evidently trying to break through the panel. Then came sharp, heavy blows. A chair was being swung against the wood.

A splintering crash and the whole section of panel swayed inward and crashed to the floor.

Three figures burst into the room. Vera, with a glad cry, rushed toward him, arms outstretched. A police officer threw down the chair he had been swinging and slowly advanced. Doctor Aldrich, overwhelmed by the developments of the past few minutes, pressed his hand to his forehead, turned deathly pale, and leaned against the wall of the room.

"He's goin' to faint!" exclaimed the officer.

Seeing the glasses on the shelf, he snatched up one and threw the contents squarely in the face of the physician.

"There now, Doctor, that'll buck ye up."

Doctor Aldrich gulped and spluttered as the liquid drenched his parted lips. His color returned.

"Thanks," he said, standing once more erect.

Then, suddenly, a look of pained surprise came over his face. His muscles twitched in a convulsive spasm. His eyes rolled up in the top of their sockets. For a brief moment he stood so. The whites of his eyes showing ghastly and terrible, his face ashy gray. Then he toppled slowly forward and crashed to the floor dead.

PICTURE TRAPPED BURGLAR

HOW Mrs. Henry L. Stengel, victim of a $36,000 daylight burglary, recognized on her maid's dresser a photograph of the man who had robbed her was told in the Harlem Court, when the maid, Louisa, Provnka, wife of Louis Hernandez Campos, the "red wig burglar," was held in $10.000 bail as an accessory to the theft.

Mrs. Stengel surprised the burglar in her apartment when she returned home at noon, and got a glimpse of him as she turned and ran to the street for help. Later she saw a photograph on her maid's dresser. The face was vaguely familiar. She asked who it was and the maid, who had told a story of being cowed by the burglar's revolver, said: "That's my husband."

The police obtained copies of the picture and circularized the entire country. Campos fell into the police net in Washington, D. C.

Mrs. Stengel, throughout the weeks after the robbery, continued to employ Louise as her personal maid, and never let the woman suspect she was being watched by the police.

The Protector

By OSCEOLA MADDEN

"ABNER COLEMAN," the old woman wailed as they started home in their old-fashioned two-horse buggy, "I do wish you would stop taking money home to keep. It's just the foolishest way, and it ain't safe, nohow. While you was gettin' the check for those hogs cashed there was a strange young feller in the bank, and he turned 'round and watched you mighty close.

"And then, too," she continued, "we was about the only folks in town what didn't have an automobile. People was laughin' at us, and while you was in the hardware store old Lem Thornton most had a fit. You know every time an automobile would stop or start off near us these hosses would rear up in terror. Of course I managed 'em all right, but Lem kept jumpin' up and makin' like he was goin' to ketch hold of 'em, and hollered loud, 'Whoa! Whoa, boys!' so's to make people laugh. I was so mortified I most cried."

"Never mind, honey," Abner consoled her, "don't you pay no attention to that old buzzard Lem. He ain't got nary a hoss, let alone a auto. All he does is to hang around lookin' for somebody to give him a drink. Get up, boys!" he called to his team, flicking them lightly with the whip.

"But, Abner," the wife persisted, "s'posin' that strange feller watchin' you in the bank was a crook, and was to follow us out to home and try to get your money? We ain't even got the telephone you promised to put in, and we are a long ways from the next house."

"Mary, for the love of hominy," the old man said impatiently, "quit your croakin'. You are worse than a hailstorm. There's the dog and my Winchester pump-gun, and, best of all, nobody couldn't find the money where I keep it hid. Even you couldn't, after I give you leave to hunt for it one time." He laughed aloud, nudging her playfully with an elbow.

"Besides," he continued, "Bert Winslow is comin' over next month to start work on that new room for Elizabeth. That'll cost a heap of money, and Bert always wants cash. Got to have it all ready and fixed up nice before next summer. You know Elizabeth said she is goin' to take a lot of photygrafts in the Blue Ridge district this year.

"Listen, Mary," Abner continued, a new thought striking him, "I never told you, but I got a special pertector for that money. Stays right with it, too, in case any Smart Alec should happen on it. Elizabeth give it to me, too."

"What is it," asked his wife, wide-eyed, "a pistol?"

Abner shook his head, smiling at her.

"Nope," he said slowly, "this pertector works by itself—all alone—if it gets a chance. Stays right with the money, too," he added mysteriously. "Don't you worry about folks laughin' at these hosses, Mary. I done right well last season, and I'm calculatin' to get a good automobile when our darter Elizabeth gets home. Reckon we better wait and talk to her first, so's to get a good make. She will want to ride around right smart takin' her pictures."

As they drove by the crossroads a man was just climbing out of a car with a paper in his hand.

"Mornin', Abner and Mrs. Coleman," he greeted them, touching his corduroy cap.

"Hello, Wallace!" Abner returned, recognizing the man as a constable of the neighborhood. "What you postin' there? Notice of a sale some place?"

"You said it, Abner," the constable re-

plied with a grin; "a man sale most any place 'round here, they tell me. If you ketch him you can sell him living or dead for one thousand bones. He busted out of the lock-up at Clifton Hall last night an' killed a man who tried to stop him. There was a feller on the outside who helped him to get out. This other feller had a automobile and they got away, but they broke down five miles up the pike. They are supposed to be hidin' 'round here some place watching for a chance to steal a car and get off. This escaped feller was tall, about six feet, black hair, and had the middle finger of his left hand shot off. No one saw the other feller very good in the dark, but the sheriff will have printed circulars out by tomorrow offering a thousand dollars reward. Every man with a telephone has been warned to be on the lookout for them. Put one of these papers on that black oak by your gate, will you, Abner?"

The old man nodded, took the paper and drove on.

The Coleman home was a plain substantial farmhouse setting about three hundred feet back from the highway at the end of a lane flanked by a double row of cedars. Abner was a hardworking, successful farmer. The home was comfortable and well-kept, but he was conservative, and did not believe in buying every new contraption that was put on the market. Recently he had reluctantly agreed to put in a telephone, and was waiting until their daughter returned from New York on her vacation before purchasing a car. From custom rather than for economy they ate their meals in the kitchen, using the comfortable dining-room as a living-room.

That evening about nine o'clock, as Abner sat reading his paper and the wife nodding over her sewing, the latter suddenly straightened up in her chair as though listening to something.

"Was that Rover made that funny noise?" she asked.

"I didn't hear him," answered Abner sleepily, "but I wouldn't be surprised. Him and that Nelson dog is always fighting. Ain't well acquainted yet. Bout time to turn in, ain't it?"

He stretched himself and yawned noisily.

"Abner!" the wife called tensely, "there's somebody out there by that window. I saw a man's face, and he ducked down quick. Pull down the shade."

As is frequenly the custom in rural districts, the shade was only partly down, the bottom being at least a foot above the window-sill.

"Shucks, Mary!" the man replied reassuringly, "I don't reckon you saw anybody. Your're jumpy tonight, but I'll take the gun outside and look around a piece." He started toward his Winchester, which stood on the floor in a corner across the room.

He had taken only two steps when without the slightest warning the unfastened window-sash was thrown up. A man was standing outside with a huge pistol leveled at Abner's head.

"Sit down in that chair again, bo," the fellow ordered.

Abner was not a coward, but he hesitated an instant, wondering if he could reach his weapon before the man fired.

"Sit down, and damn quick, you fool, or I'll drop you!" the man at the window snapped out. Seeing the uselessness of disobeying, Abner sat down again. His wife in her rocking-chair was speechless with terror. As the farmer sat down the man with the gun called to some one who was with him in the dark: "Got that line, Nick? Well, get inside with it." As he moved to one side of the window, Abner noticed that he was holding the pistol in his left hand and that the middle finger was missing. Beyond a doubt this was the prisoner who had broken jail at Clifton Hall the previous night, the crook who killed a man that tried to stop him.

Another head appeared at the window, and with surprising ease a man leaped into the room. He also held a gun, and across his shoulder was a piece of rope which the farmer recognized as his wife's clothesline. As the newcomer covered Abner with his weapon the other man came through the window and promptly drew down the sash and the shade.

"Tie him up, Nick," the tall man or-

dered. Abner's arms were pulled behind the chair and he was bound to it hand and foot. As the tight rope bit into his arms he involuntarily flinched. His wife gave a little scream.

"Don't hurt him!" she cried, dropping to her knees. "Please don't hurt my husband."

The tall fellow sprang to her side and slapped her in the face.

"Another yell like that and I will plug you!" he cried with an oath. His face was distorted with anger and beyond a doubt he would not have hesitated to shoot.

"Here, Nick, tie her in that rocker. Now, you two, listen to me. If either of you let out a yip you'll get yours. Where is that money hid? Come clean, or I will plug you."

The farmer's face was livid with rage at the treatment of his wife, but he was helpless and did not delay answering:

"My wallet is in my overcoat pocket, hanging on the back of the door there," he said. While the man called Nick stood guard the tall fellow sprang forward and grabbed the coat, from the pocket of which he eagerly took a wallet and opened it.

"Only eight dollars!" He threw the wallet to the floor and strode angrily over to Abner. "We ain't got no time to waste here. Nick saw you cash a check for five hundred dollars today. "Will you tell where it is?" Abner silently shook his head, and the robber promptly began to kick him upon the shins. The pain was fearful and the farmer groaned with anguish.

"Will you tell?" the man demanded. Again Abner shook his head, and this time the fellow reached into a pocket and drew out a large hook-bladed penknife, which he opened. Before he could use it Nick called to him:

"Say, Bill, you're wasting time with that old fool. Let's bump 'em both off and search the whole damn place." He pointed his pistol at the woman, but Bill stopped him.

"If we bump 'em off now, Nick, maybe we wouldn't find the stuff at all. Wait a minute," he said, with an ugly smile, pointing to the woman. "I think I can make her talk—and damn quick, too."

He walked over to the farmer's wife and, partly loosening her bandages, slipped one arm out and proceeded to twist it in its socket. She screamed with the pain, and Abner strained vainly to loose himself to go to her rescue.

"I don't know where the money is," she cried, pale and almost fainting from the torture. "I don't know. He never told me. Oh, Abner!" she appealed to her husband, "he is killing me. Tell them where the money is. For God's sake, let them have it!"

"Stop! Stop, you devils!" Abner cried. "I will tell you where it is. Take off the top of the mantel, and you will find it there."

Both men rushed to the mantel behind the stove, and, sweeping the clock and vases which stood on it to the floor, they wrenched off the slab of black enameled slate which formed the top. It came off readily, showing a long hollow space below. Nick had a flashlight ready, and its rays showed them a tin box about six inches long, and near it a bottle of liquid labeled "Best Corn Whisky."

Bill snatched up the box and his companion took charge of the bottle, regarding it with smiling eyes. The box was full of green and golden bills, which they began to count eagerly, each watching closely with greedy eyes.

"Four thousand," Bill announced. "Two grand for each. That's not so bad. We had better be moving from here now. This guy ain't got no car, but there's a feller down the road half a mile who's got a Ford we can swipe. That's the best we can do. How's that corn, Nick?"

Nick had been too busy watching the count of the money to even take a drink, but he now uncorked the bottle and placed it to his lips. Then paused to smell it.

"Smells sort of funny, Bill, but these hicks make their own stuff, and it smells different from bonded liquor. Here's luck to us." He took a long swallow, and as he removed the bottle from his lips Bill grabbed it from him.

Abner, tied fast to his chair, was watching them intently. When they found the

money his face went ashy as he saw them pocket his hard-earned savings, but now, as the men drank from the bottle his eyes lighted up with a peculiar gleam, and he almost smiled as he watched.

Nick passed the bottle to his companion. He stood for a second with a dazed look on his face, and then half turning around, he pitched heavily to the floor and lay perfectly still. Bill, drinking from the bottle, took it from his lips and stared at his companion, wondering what had happened. Instantly the truth dawned upon him. The liquor was poisoned, and they had been tricked.

But it was too late. Even as his face distorted with rage he slumped to the floor. But his vitality was greater than his partner's, for as he fell, with a final desperate effort he raised a shaking pistol and fired at Abner's heart.

The farmer saw the action, and with a powerful effort threw himself to one side. His chair toppled over as a bullet plowed through his arm and he fell heavily upon his face.

The old woman had fainted. Abner, securely bound to the heavy chair, and lying face down upon the floor with a wounded arm, did nothing but listen. But he heard nothing. Following the terrible uproar of a minute ago there was now complete silence. Carefully he twisted and threw himself about until he could see across the room. Lying upon the floor near the stove were the two robbers, both stone dead. Nearer him was the figure of his wife bound to her chair, one arm loosened and her head hanging to one side as though she, too, were dead. Frantically he struggled to regain his feet, but each effort only threw him back upon his face.

"Mary! Mary!" he shouted to his unconscious spouse. She moaned feebly, and presently raised her head and gazed around, her eyes finally resting upon her husband lying bound at her feet. Though badly wrenched, her arm was not useless, and in a few minutes she succeeded in releasing herself and her husband.

Abner's first act was to get back his money which the dead robbers had taken, and then, after bandaging his injured arm, and accompanied by his wife, he hastened to a neighbor who had a telephone and got word to the sheriff.

In a little more than an hour the sheriff, accompanied by his deputy, reach the farm.

"Well, Abner," he said with a look of admiration upon his face, "it beats me how you managed, but you saved your life and your dough, and you caught a thousand-dollar crook, even if he is dead. But do you mind telling us just how you did it?"

"Well," said Abner slowly, bending over to rub his bruised shins, and to hide his embarrassment, "Mary was right. From now on I shall keep my money in the bank. When I put my money in that there place I knew that anybody who would hunt hard enough to find it deserved what was coming to him, so I put a pint of corn liquor with it." He grinned knowingly at the officer.

"Corn liquor?" the sheriff said. "I know the stuff's plum pizen, Abner, but what on earth did you put in it to make it work so fast?"

"You know my daughter Elizabeth?" asked Abner. "Well, in the summer time when she is home she does a lot of photygrafing and uses lots of stuff in bottles—develops things. One day last summer she showed me a bottle of stuff she called cyanide of something, and said it would kill a man before he could shut his eyes. So when I was looking for something to pertect my money I poured some of that cyanide into the corn liquor, and you see how it worked."

"That sure was some protector, Abner," the sheriff grinned.

The Impossible Crime

By LESLEY BURKS

"MR. BAIRD," the blonde girl at the exchange board called softly. Horace Baird, always courteous to even the least of his employees, turned toward her with the same deferential air he would have used toward the highest paying guest in the hotel.

"I'm afraid there's something wrong on the fifth floor," the girl said nervously. "Miss Beverly's manager has phoned several times within the last hour, but no one answers in her apartment. She didn't show up at rehearsal, so he says, and he is anxious to get her. I've called and called, but I can't get an answer."

"Perhaps she is out," suggested Baird.

"No, her key's not in the box, and I asked one of the boys to go up and tell her to answer the phone. He couldn't raise any one, but he says the lights are on in her rooms, and that the door opening into the hall is locked on the inside. He could see the key in the lock."

Baird considered for a moment. His eyes wandered over the spacious lobby where chatting groups stood here and there, or men smoked and read in the great easy-chairs placed at frequent intervals about the wide space.

"Say nothing about this," he counseled quietly. "I will take Harvey and go upstairs. It is probable there is nothing wrong. I'll look into it."

He paused for a word with Harvey, the porter stationed at the entrance, and the two entered the elevator.

Christine Beverly's apartment on the fifth floor was brightly lighted, despite the fact that the noonday sun must be pouring in her windows, but no answer came to Baird's quick knock on the locked door.

"See if you can see anything through the transom, Harvey."

The porter had placed a chair before the door and his face was close against the closed transom before the manager had finished speaking. For a moment he gazed into the room, then said in a hushed tone: "Looks like something's the matter, Mr. Baird. Miss Beverly's on the couch, but she's lying awful queer."

Baird pulled out his bunch of keys hastily. With the small blade of his knife he pushed the key from the lock and they heard it fall with a soft thud to the floor inside. Then with his pass-key he opened the door.

Christine Beverly lay in a queer huddled-up posture on the big davenport opposite the door. Her face was buried among the cushions and one arm hung limply over the side of the couch.

Baird bent over her with a grave face. He lifted the hand which hung over the edge of the couch. It fell lifelessly from his grasp. Baird shook his head. "Go down quietly, Harvey, and tell Reynolds at the desk to locate Doctor Leslie and send him up. I'd rather not phone from here on account of the girl at the board. She might talk, and we want to keep this quiet as long as we can. If Doctor Leslie can't be found, get some other physician, but as Doctor Leslie has treated her before, he would, of course, be preferable."

Doctor Leslie was not in the hotel, and it was more than fifteen minutes before the flurried Reynolds could locate a doctor. The man he finally sent to 510 was not even a practicing physician, but an interne from one of the local hospitals who happened to be calling on a friend at the hotel.

"However," as Reynolds soliloquized,

"he surely can tell if the girl's alive or not."

Young Doctor Danforth lifted the limp hand as Baird had done and felt for the pulse.

"I have left her as we found her," Baird whispered as if his voice might disturb the quiet form. "I didn't know——"

Doctor Danforth nodded, then gently turned the girl over. As he did so a cry of horror burst from both men. From the girl's left breast the black, ebony handle of a knife protruded. The deep rose of the cushions upon which she lay was stained with a darker, more sanguinary hue. "What a pity!" said Danforth softly. His eyes rested with all the admiration of youth on the beautiful face, framed loosely in the tangled black of her hair. She was wrapped carelessly in a Japanese kimono of creamy silk, embroidered with cherry blossoms, over the white nightrobe she wore.

"We must notify the police," interrupted Baird sharply. "This is a bad thing for the hotel; but I should not consider that now, of course. Has she been dead long?"

"No, only a short time. The body is still warm—there is no rigor."

"The telephone girl has been trying to get the apartment for the past hour or more. That may help establish the time. Poor girl, what she must have suffered to drive her to this."

Danforth turned to him in surprise.

"Why," he murmured, a little uncertainly. "It is not suicide. It would be difficult, I should say impossible, for a blow like that to be self-inflicted."

Baird gazed at him in consternation.

"Why, man," he cried impatiently, "it must be suicide. The door was locked on the inside, the transom is locked. There is no possible way of getting in those windows. They may be locked, too, for all I know. You are mistaken, I'm sure."

Danforth shrugged his shoulders.

"The coroner can determine that," he said. "I'm only giving my opinion. In the meantime, as you say, the police must be notified."

Baird stepped to the telephone. Danforth lingered by the couch, his eyes clinging in a sort of fascination to the still, exotic face. He was young and inexperienced, and the case enthralled even while it revolted him.

Ten minutes later a big man in the uniform of captain of police came into the room, followed by a shorter, slighter man in plain clothes.

The big man nodded shortly to Baird.

"Bad thing for the hotel, this," he said.

"We hope to keep it as quiet as possible," returned the manager. "At any rate, the Savoy is too well established to suffer greatly from a thing of this kind." Baird glanced at Danforth, and added: "This is Doctor Danforth, Captain Ryus. He was not Miss Beverly's physician, but the only doctor available when we found the body."

He stated briefly the circumstances surrounding the discovery of Miss Beverly's death.

"The door was locked on the inside, you say?"

"Yes, also the transom, as you may see."

"And the windows?"

"As you see them now."

Captain Ryus stepped to each window in turn.

"All locked; evidently a case of suicide."

Danforth bit his lips doubtfully. After all, he might be mistaken. It was for the coroner to determine. He said nothing therefore, only told the men from Headquarters of his findings, and showed them the position of the body as he had discovered it.

"I never saw a suicide with an expression like that," murmured Dalton, the young man in plain clothes. "She hasn't the look of one who contemplates death."

Captain Ryus looked again at the dead girl. Her face was peaceful, almost smiling, the lips parted slightly, showing the even, white teeth.

Dalton turned as the door opened.

"Here's Doctor Jones now," he said, with an air of relief. "This is a matter for him to decide."

Doctor Jones, the coroner, examined the body swiftly and expertly. Hardened to such scenes, he seemed an emotionless automaton to the young doctor who watched

him, admiring his skill even while he marveled at his callousness.

"Stabbed under the fifth rib—a heavy blow," he pronounced. "Clear case of murder."

"Not a suicide?" gasped Baird incredulously.

"Nope," returned Doctor Jones succinctly.

"But, man, it must be. The room was locked—how could any one enter to attack the girl?"

"That's for the police to find out." Doctor Jones grinned impudently at young Dalton.

"At what hour would you say death occurred, doctor?" inquired Captain Ryus.

"Hard to say exactly at this stage. Rigor mortis not set in yet. Some time this morning."

"If I may be excused now——" began Baird softly.

"Just a minute, Mr. Baird. What information can you give us about the young lady, her friends, mode of life, etc."

"I really know little about Miss Beverly," returned Baird thoughtfully. "I have known her—that is, she has lived in the hotel here for about three years. She is, as you know, an actress, taking a prominent part in one of the musical comedies playing on Broadway. She has, I know, many friends, but I know none of them by name."

Captain Ryus nodded his dismissal.

"You'll be downstairs in case I want you?"

"Yes, I'll not leave the hotel."

They were questioning the porter, Harvey, as Baird left the room, the man giving again his account of finding the body. Baird felt physically sick, nauseated. He walked down the four flights of stairs rather than take the elevator, in order to give himself time to recover his poise. As he paused at the landing of the last flight to survey the spacious lobby below, it seemed to him that already a rumor of something out of the ordinary had reached the guests downstairs. The police had been seen going in, the phone girl had talked—he bit his lip in irritation.

Late that afternoon, the preliminaries over, the body removed to a local undertaking establishment where the inquest would be held later, Peter Dalton buckled down to work in earnest. He had shown considerable acumen in a number of minor affairs, but this was his first experience since his promotion to the homicide squad and he felt that a satisfactory termination to this particular case would be the stepping-stone to success for him.

He had interviewed Harvey and the hotel manager again. They both adhered to their statements of the morning. The only entrance to the room had been locked on the inside, the windows had not been touched until Captain Ryus had examined them and found them locked. Even had this not been the case, there would have been no conceivable way for a man to climb up a sheer wall and enter a window on the fifth floor.

If one man alone had discovered the body, he would have doubted the assertion that the door had been locked on the inside, but knowing Baird to be a man of highest reputation, and as Harvey had proved upon investigation to be a fellow honest almost to a fault, he felt that he must accept this as a veritable premise.

He sought admission that night behind the scenes at the theatre where Christine had played, to ascertain, if he could, just who had been her friends. The members of the company, upon learning who he was, flocked about him with eager questions.

"Why, you were with her last night, Gloria," cried one black-eyed houri to a piquant little blonde in blue and silver.

The little blonde shivered deliciously.

"Yes, isn't it terrible," she gurgled. "Poor Chris, whoever thought she'd come to this."

Dalton turned quickly.

"You were with Miss Beverly last night?"

"Yes, until one o'clock this morning." A trace of alarm clouded her blue eyes. "You wouldn't suspect——?"

Dalton smiled reassuringly.

"No, she was killed later than that. But I would like to have a little talk with you, if you don't mind."

Gloria smiled coquettishly at him. Dalton was a good-looking chap, and she was

not averse to prolonging the acquaintance. "I must go on in a few minutes," she said, glancing at the little platinum watch on her wrist. "If you will be here at half-past eleven, we can go up to my apartment." She turned to go, but with a backward glance over her shoulder whispered significantly: "I may be able to help you."

Two hours later Dalton was waiting outside for the little show-girl. It was cold, a rim of white clung to his crisp little mustache and his breath rose frostily in the still air.

At last the girls came out, a group of them together, chattering and laughing. Several of them recognized the detective and glanced at him curiously, but Gloria detached herself from the group and hurried up to him, her rosy face glowing between the somber velvet of her hat and the black fur of her coat.

She seemed a frivolous, inconsequent little thing to Dalton, but she might be able to help him. In the meantime it was not at all disagreeable to play squire to so fair a damsel. She snuggled close to him in the taxi, the penetrating perfume she affected filling up the narrow space. They stopped at one of the all-night restaurants for a "bite" that woefully depleted Dalton's pocketbook. He breathed a sigh of relief when at last they entered Gloria's little apartment, a tiny space fairly aglow with color under the shaded lights.

"And now," said Gloria, throwing off her coat and sinking into the depths of a high-cushioned chair, "we can talk."

She peered at him inquisitively out of bright eyes.

"First, I want to know if that account in the newspapers this afternoon is the real dope."

"It was a fairly accurate account, I believe," returned Dalton.

"That is all true, then, about the locked door business? That's a funny thing, I must say. How do you figure it out?"

"I don't figure it out—yet. I've given up that angle of it temporarily. What I'm looking for just now is motives, and I'm relying upon you to help me."

"And I'm the little fellow that can do it," boasted the girl. "Soon's I read that Chris was killed, I thought of Hamilton Wade."

"Not *the* Hamilton Wade?" interrupted Dalton.

"Ham Wade himself, old millionaire Wade's son. He and Chris were engaged, but strictly on the q. t. I'm the only one Chris told. Chris sure had him going for a while, but when he found out she was a—well, anyway, he tried to get out of it, but she held on to him. She threatened to sue him and create all kinds of scandal, and you know how proud the Wades are. How's that for a motive?"

"But how strange no one knew of their relations. No one mentioned his name at the hotel."

"Oh, well, he's only been there a few times. I know the manager and the desk clerk have seen him and knew who he was, but of course they wouldn't want to drag him into it unless they had to.

"But why did he want to break off with Miss Beverly? You started to say she was —what?"

"I meant to say that Wade found out about some old love affair of Chris's. She had another string to her bow, some one she never told even me about, but some way Wade got wise and there was the deuce to pay."

"And you were there last night?"

"Yes; poor Chris was feeling blue. I know she really was wild about Hamilton Wade. I went home with her; she talked about him all the evening, and just before I left she asked me to stay all night. She said she was afraid to be alone. Don't that sound as though Wade had threatened her? I couldn't stay, of course; had no clothes along and, anyway, I was getting tired of hearing Chris moon around."

Dalton pondered over this for a moment. He could not picture young Wade in this. But, then, when had money and social prominence exempted a man from mistakes? Dalton charitably substituted the last word for one more unpleasant.

"Well, what do you make of it?" Gloria broke in impatiently.

"I don't know. I'll look into it. We

must be sure of ourselves before accusing a man like Hamilton Wade. And, anyway, how would he get in?"

"How'd any one get in, for that matter?" retorted the girl.

Dalton rose.

"Thank you for the information you've given me, little lady. If you think of anything else, just phone me."

"Sure I will." Gloria preened herself importantly. "But I think you'll find I've put you on the right track."

It was too late to see Wade that night, Dalton reflected regretfully as he turned into the moonlit street. The interview with the young millionaire, which he could not but feel would prove an important one, must perforce wait. He suddenly realized how tired he was and, swinging on a homebound car, dwelt with a sense of satisfaction on the thought of home and rest.

The next morning he telephoned to Hamilton Wade. But it was evening before he was able to arrange for an interview. The two met at nine o'clock that night in the big library of the Wade town house.

Outside the virginal twilight; inside, darkness, except where the student's lamp on the wide table shed a circle of light upon the polished surface. The two men sat opposite each other, each face grave, intent—Dalton's eager, seeking; Hamilton Wade's, somber and composed, yet touched with a sort of underlying tragedy held by sheer force of will from passing that barrier of reserve.

"Christine!" Hamilton Wade's voice breathed the word like a sigh. In that moment he must have seen the vision of her radiant face as it had been in life. On the floor lay the crumpled sheets of the evening paper. He had been reading the latest version of Christine Beverly's death.

"You have promised that what I tell you will be kept from the newspapers. I would rather have had it all die with her, but"—he smiled ruefully—"we are permitted no sentimental reticence with the police. In a way it will be a relief to tell you. I have mulled it over in my mind so long, wondering if I was right or wrong. Perhaps if we had married she would have changed—but, no, they never change.

"We were engaged. It was supposed to be a secret between us, but of course, like all women, she told."

"Were you engaged at the time of her death?" questioned Dalton.

"No; I will explain. I met Christine Beverly through a friend of mine, and the first sight I had of her bowled me over completely. She was absolutely the most beautiful thing I ever looked at. I was wild about her. I still am," he added huskily. "I met her a number of times at after-theatre suppers and so on. She would never let me come to the hotel except once or twice. We were soon engaged, and I really believe Christine liked me.

"Then came the disillusionment. Christine's former lover, a man whom she had promised to marry and had played with for years, came to me. He had found out about Christine and me, I don't know how. He had financed her since the time when she was only a singer in one of the cheap cabarets, and she was throwing him over for me. I had the most money, you know.

"But that wasn't the worst. He told me, and I believed him, that Christine was addicted to the use of morphine. That would account to me for her moods, spells of feverish gaiety alternated with fits of despondency."

A drug addict! Dalton remembered Gloria's half-spoken sentence. "She was a——" Why had she been unwilling to tell? Was it because she shared in the habit? Wade's voice was continuing in a repressed monotone.

"Maybe I could have overlooked the other man—I don't know, I loved her so—but a 'dope fiend'! I had an aunt once—well, I know what it means. I couldn't go on with it, so we broke."

"She agreed to it?"

"Well, naturally, she protested at first, although she didn't deny anything, but I am sure that she would have seen things in a different light after she had thought it all over."

"Who is the other man?"

"Is it necessary to tell you that? I bear

him no ill will. For both his sake and Chris's, I would prefer to keep silent on that point."

"I am afraid I must ask you to tell me."

Wade bent forward, speaking the name almost in a whisper.

"He had nothing to do with her death, of course. She must have killed herself, in spite of what the doctors say. The locked room——"

But Dalton was not listening. The locked door, the still figure on the couch, the motive—his face lit up with triumph. He had found the loose end, the great idea had sprung from his brain, Athena like, full-grown. He could hardly conceal his excitement as he terminated the interview.

At the Savory things had settled back into their usual routine.

Manager Baird paused at the desk. His eyes wandered over the scene with a sense of satisfaction. Everything was running smoothly. Only a few guests had left the hotel on account of the recent tragedy. In a few days more the murder would be practically forgotten.

His keen eyes spied Dalton just entering the double storm-doors and a frown contracted his smooth forehead. He disliked to have the police passing through the hotel. He greeted the plainclothes man courteously, however.

"Is there anything new?"

"Yes," returned Dalton. "I've struck a new lead. Wanted to consult you. Can you spare a few minutes?"

"In there." Baird nodded toward a curtained recess off the main lobby. "Be with you in a moment." He paused to give the desk clerk a few low-toned instructions, then followed the detective.

"If you'll be as brief as possible, please," murmured Baird, lighting a cigarette. "I'm rather a busy man, you know."

Dalton glanced at him, a certain admiration in his glance.

"It won't take me long to tell you what I have found out," he said. "A few new facts concerning Miss Beverly have come to light. It seems she was affianced to a wealthy man of this city. Moreover, she was a drug-addict."

"Very interesting, I am sure, but how—"

"Listen. The two quarreled one evening. The engagement was broken. Miss Beverly clung to the hope of a reconciliation, and kept the news of the broken engagement even from one whom she had told of the approaching marriage.

"However, it seems that one night, a few days after the estrangement, she began to despair of the quarrel ever being patched up. On this particular night, worried and despairing after hours of wakefulness, she took an extra large dose of the drug, an amount sufficient to stupefy her senses for hours. She did not respond to the ringing of her phone next morning or repeated knocks on her door.

"Fearing something wrong, the hotel manager—yourself, Mr. Baird—and one of the porters effected an entrance to her room. They found the girl asleep, stupefied. But she was not dead.

"The porter was sent for a doctor—a doctor whom you happened to know was not in the hotel. While Harvey was gone, you, the former lover of Christine Beverly, believing you could escape suspicion and preferring to see her dead rather than give her up to another, seized a knife from her desk, a knife that has since been identified as part of her ebony desk-set, and——"

"Stop!" Baird's face was ashen. "This is a fairy tale. You have an ingenious mind, Mr. Dalton. But what proof have you of what you assert?"

"The proof of your fingerprints on the handle of the knife," cried Dalton triumphantly. "They were compared with your fingerprints taken from the polished table where you stood resting your hand that morning."

"It's a lie. I wiped——"

"You wiped the handle of the dagger. True, but you bungled in your haste. One print was left."

Baird's head dropped to his breast. His attitude indicated his surrender. There was a certain amount of commiseration in Dalton's glance, remembering, as he did, that the handle of the dagger had been free from fingerprints.

The Stall

By JAMES BENEDICT

THROUGH the window sprang Edson after the flying white paper. The night outside was dark, and into this dark fled the paper, borne along by the first gusts of wind that presaged a coming storm.

Like an elusive moth, the paper fluttering into the inky black was lost, and Edson was lost with it; the tenacious soot painted over the thin light filtering through the window blotting him out. Suddenly in the pulsing darkness a soft, lapping noise warned him back. The threat of the hidden menace swung him around. The loose red shale broke and crumbled away. His footing gone, he made one desperate effort to right himself. Seesawing on the edge of the precipice, a great rush of wind staggered him. His outflung empty hands clutched frantically at nothing, clawing out pockets in the dark as if expecting it to solidify and save him. And with a loud shout he went backwards, down, down into the thick blackness of the abyss!

Two men rounding the corner of the house echoed his shout with sharp cries of warning. They headed straight for the spot where Edson had disappeared. One of them, making use of an electric torch, kept on to the very brink. Again and again he called the vanished man's name; but the waves, now lashing angrily at the base of the cliff, drowned his voice, and the multitudinous wailing noises of the onrushing storm answered him.

A long, breathless interval. The two men conversed in hushed voices. And then the electric flash began to systematically play back and forth along the edge of the bluff. Held to its strange task by a man with a hand that never wavered, its bright eye nimbly swept the crevices among the rocks and the interstices of the stunted bushes. And just as the first big drops of rain spattered down it picked out the fugitive paper tangled in a privet hedge that slanted down from the north end of the house.

"There it is, sir!" and the older of the two, a stooped, white-haired servant, bustled forward.

"Never mind, Meeker!" interrupted Brent. Thrusting Meeker aside, the thin-lipped man with the torch dropped to his knees beside the hedge. Carefully detaching the paper, he flashed his light upon it before dropping it into his pocket. "Go back into the house. I am going down the boat-path," he said.

About sunset the next day a runabout with two men in it chugged up the winding, wooded drive to The Bluffs. Brent, recognizing Andrews, the local chief of police, was out of the house and waiting when the car drew up under the portico.

"Hello, Brent; meet Mr. Keene, manager of the William Keene National Detective Agency, New York City," said Andrews, descending from the car and pulling his companion forward by the elbow.

"That's a thickly-wooded drive," observed Keene in a quick imperative tone of voice, a voice strangely cultured, too, for one so ruggedly built. He was not wasting a glance on the great sweep of magnificent green lawns and terraces leading to a view of the river a mile away. Almost anxiously he was examining the green mouth of the drive from which the car had a minute before emerged.

"The view, the view, man!" exclaimed Andrews finally, swinging Keene around to face the river.

Brent, who had made no attempt to acknowledge the introduction, was staring blankly at the detective.

"What's the news, Andrews?" he suddenly demanded.

"Bad news. That's what I came out about," announced Andrews solemnly. "The body of your cousin, Brent, was washed ashore at Sandy Bottom, that little cove half-way between the Bluffs and the town."

"Washed ashore? Why I—I thought he could swim." It was evident that Brent was under something of a strain. Although outwardly he was striving to appear calm, his voice shook perceptibly, his neck muscles twitched, his sombre eye, shifting back and forth from Andrews to Keene, were never still.

"Edson was almost a stranger to you, wasn't he?" asked Keene carelessly.

"Yes; but he was my cousin, my only living relative. Come inside, both of you." Brent in the lead, the trio entered a fine, comfortable living-room at the front of the house.

"Yes," repeated Brent, after going into the next room and returning with a box of cigars, "he was my own first cousin, but I hardly knew Edson by sight. He had always lived in New York."

"A fine young fellow, too, eh?" said Keene gloomily.

"A friend of yours?" Brent jerked out.

"I was fairly intimate with him; got to know him three years ago when he was police reporter on the *Metropolitan News;* and so I came here as soon as I heard what had happened."

Brent nodded. "He slipped from the edge of Indian Rock. Meeker, the houseman, saw the accident."

"You call it an accident?" Keene's tone was courteously deliberate.

"Accident? Why, of course it was an accident!" exclaimed Brent, staring.

"Then Edson had no cause to commit suicide?"

Brent's eyes lost their startled look. "Not that I know of; why should he?" he said slowly. "Hadn't he everything to live for? He would have come into the bulk of granddad's estate! The old gentleman, you see, was queer. Not far from death's door he took a dislike to me. That's how he came to make another will in favor of Edson. He mailed it at once. A sure sign of senility. I mean, his wild whims, his immoderate fits of temper."

The detective nodded soothingly and puffed at his cigar. "What started it all?" he asked.

"It was a gambling debt that riled Gramp. a debt that I did not have the money to meet. The old fellow never gambled a penny in his life. That's why he wouldn't listen to me. He tore up a will in my favor and not knowing that he was dying, scrawled a new one in favor of Edson. It was his way of teaching me a lesson. He died the next day."

"How did Edson meet his death?"

"He jumped through the library window and fell from Indian Rock in the dark."

"Why is it called Indian Rock?"

"Long ago a redskin, when pursued by hostile warriors, is said to have leaped from the rock and escaped."

"Is that possible?"

"I don't know. The water is deep down there. They call it the perch hole."

"Why didn't you go out in a boat, then, and look for Edson?"

"I did go out," said Brent huskily, his face a trifle paler. "I ran down the path to the boat-house, and sculled around in the dark. It was useless; black as pitch. I couldn't see my hand before my face. Edson must have hit a rock in his dive."

"Why do you think that?"

"Because he could swim. He told me it was his favorite sport."

"What became of the will?"

Brent took a rumpled paper from his pocket. "Here it is. I found it in the hedge. It has no value now, I guess. I am the sole living relative and heir."

"I'll look it over at my leisure," said Keene, pocketing the paper. "Where is the library?"

"On the other side of the house."

Down the great hall they passed and through a narrow door into a long, narrow room with an old-fashioned window at the other end of it overlooking the bay.

"Edson dropped the will on that table," said Brent, indicating a green-topped reading table near the window. "It was a fool thing to do. The wind was already beginning to force its way through the house."

Barely glancing at the table, Keene turned to a wall-stand upon which rested a sixteen-inch electric fan. He bent over the fan, straightened up, examined the nearby table, the window and the door.

"When and why was the fan placed on this stand?" he asked.

"Yesterday," said Brent. The expression on his face subtly changed. His dark eyes veiled something. For the first time his air of confident superiority was not in evidence. He seemed not quite sure of himself. "It wasn't so awfully hot, but this room was stuffy," he went on. "The breeze was all from the other side of the house. Besides, we always get the fans out about this time and put them away in the fall."

"The wind did not penetrate here?" persisted Keene.

"Not during the day. Last night a storm broke over the valley, following down into the bay. The first sharp gust from the hall drove the will out of the window.

Keene now crossed to the window and stood a moment looking out over the blue water. "Why, the edge of that rock can't be a dozen feet off," he said suddenly in a surprised voice.

"You are mistaken. It's double that distance from the window," snapped Brent irritably.

Returning to the table Keene rested his hand upon it.

"Is this where Edson dropped the will?" he asked.

"That's it; you've just hit it," said Brent. "Right where your hand is."

"And was he facing toward or away from the window?"

Brent hesitated. "I don't know. Oh, toward the window, of course! After one glance at the will, scrawled in Gramp's illegible hand, I suggested a cocktail in the dining-room before we attempted to decipher it."

"Edson's back was toward you," said Keene. "He could not see where the draft came from. He could only understand that a sudden current of air hurtled the will through the window, and his natural impulse was to drive after it."

"That's right," approved Brent. "When I opened the door the sudden draught swept the will away. Edson never looked around. He just dove out of the window after it."

"Why didn't you follow Edson through the window?" said Keene suddenly.

"It's a five-foot drop, that's why! I didn't want to break any bones, did I? I never thought he would be over the cliff before I could dash around the corner of the house."

Keene stepped back from the table, his gaze once more roving the length and breadth of the room. "Let's go out to Indian Rock," he suggested, "before the dark shuts down and spoils our view."

The three men retracing their course down the hall left the house by the front door and made their way along a winding path until they reached the edge of the cliff.

"Edson stood about here when I caught my last glimpse of him," said Brent. "I could just make him out by the light from the window. He swung around, facing the gale, threw up his hands and was gone."

Keene thrust his hand down into the baggy side pocket of his coat.

"From what direction was the wind blowing?" he asked carelessly, watching a white sail about the size of a gull's wing far out on the bay.

"From the front of the house."

Suddenly Keene turned on Brent. "You mean to say the wind from the hall *backed up the room* and carried the will through that end window?" he exploded. "How could that be possible?"

"That's right!" chimed in Andrews. "Don't you see what he's driving at, Brent? The door is at one end of the library, this window at the other."

Not a sound was heard but the little waves lapping at the foot of the cliff. Andrews was excited, Keene's face was forbidding. Brent went a shade paler in the waning light. His gaze shifted back and forth; he seemed to be watching every

movement the two men made. "It must be possible," he said doggedly, "because it happened just as I told you."

Keene shook his head.

"What's the matter?" Brent's voice trembled. "Do you doubt my word?"

"Any wind through that library door," said Keene positively, "would inevitably carry the paper *across* the room or into a far corner."

"You're trying to trip me," stammered Brent, shaking like a leaf, his face ghastly in its pallor, "but you can't frighten me. I have nothing to confess. I——"

"You're a liar!" snapped Keene, seizing the other's arm. "I tell you, I'll jog your memory now. Why was that electric fan, so close to the table, turned on last night? Come clean."

The other man cringed. "Turned on?" he half whispered.

"You don't deny it!"

"Yes—I mean no," Brent contradicted himself. "It was warm in there. The fan was needed for ventilation."

"Now I want the truth," said Keene. "Listen! Edson dropped the will. You then turned on the fan. You wanted him out in the black there, with the precipice only a few feet away. A dozen steps would carry him to the edge of the drop with the deep water beneath. You planned that. You wanted to destroy the will, and you wanted to get Edson, too."

A fog was shutting down over the bay, bringing a sense of unreality and the darkness with it. "The fan," began Brent, but broke off. His two hands, palms out and fingers widespread, shot up before his suddenly averted face, as if to shut out the sight of the tall, misty figure that swayed up over the privet hedge, and in the pale twilight bore silently, steadily, down on him.

"Edson!" screamed Brent. "I didn't mean to do it. No, I tell you, I thought you could swim ashore. No! No! No! Keep away! Keep away!" He collapsed against Keene, who slipped the handcuffs over his unresisting wrists.

"That's not a ghost," laughed Keene, jerking Brent to his feet. "Edson's body washed ashore last night, but with enough breath left in it for him to reach a hotel and to get in touch with me over long-distance. We dropped Edson at the mouth of the drive before we drove up to the house. And I gave him instructions to slip around to the rear and conceal himself behind that hedge to appear before you at the opportune moment. It was just a 'stall.'"

Brent's jaw sagged, his eyes blinked and widened, and the flame of comprehension leaped up in them. "A stall?" he repeated.

"Yes, a ruse," chuckled Keene, "by means of which the police occasionally outsmart the cleverest criminal. Of course we can't indict you for murder, but you'll get a stiff sentence for attempting it. Come along!"

BLOW ONE SAFE; TWO CONTAINING VALUABLES ESCAPE

UNSET diamonds and finished jewelry valued at $20,000 were stolen by thieves recently, who forced an entrance into the factory of the Stern Jewelry Manufacturing Company at No. 72 Tichenor street, Newark, N. J., and blew one of the safes.

There was $75,000 worth of jewelry in the two other safes, but no attempt was made to open them.

An acetylene torch was used to burn a hole in the safe. Nitroglycerine blew off one door and the other was left hanging by a hinge. The inner door was drilled. Some of the concern's tools were used to supplement the burglar's equipment.

The robbers missed a case containing approximately $10,000 worth of jewels. Detectives say the job was done by skilled cracksmen.

The Forbidden Room

By EDWARD LEE BENNETT

PART TWO

CHAPTER THREE

THE SILVER SEASHELL INN

MILLER, the proprietor of the Silver Seashell, bore a decidedly unsavory reputation with the police. However, he had thus far always managed to escape arrest, although many times only by a hair's-breadth.

It was with Miller that Mordell was talking. Carson was unable to hear what was being said, but assumed that the latter was making inquiry about the missing Toops. He fancied Miller was disturbed by the tenor's interrogation.

"What have you done with Toops, Miller?"

A girl in the early twenties, strikingly handsome in a brunette way, had come in and was now eying the bartender with no uncertain animosity. Watching the shifty-eyed proprietor closely, Carson fancied a second time that his face twitched momentarily at the question. Miller's ugly face twisted into a distorted grin. He waved his great arms clumsily as if they were too heavy for his squat body.

"What's the matter with you people?" he demanded in a coarse, raucous tone. "Here's this gent asking for Toops one minute and then you come along. Why ask me? Do you think I have him hid under the counter or something like that? I've got my business to 'tend to. I don't have time to keep track of all your friends. I'm sorry, but I ain't seen him for some time."

"Are you looking for Toops, too?" the girl asked Mordell, in some surprise. Evidently his reply, which the detective did not catch, satisfied her, for she turned once more to the bartender.

"If anything's happened to Toops you look out," she warned him, with narrowing eyes in which a deep fire gleamed.

"Say, who's the tragedy queen?" some one inquired at a table near Carson's.

"Sh! That's Betty Moore, the dancer," came the murmured reply. "She hangs out here nights, and does a song-and-dance act sometimes. She's got an awful crush on this guy Toops. He's a queer-looking bird, too, but he's probably got plenty of jack. Anyhow, Miller and Toops had a little argument over her about a month ago and Toops cleaned up the floor with our worthy host. See that scar on the side of his nose. It's still red. Well, Toops gave him that. Miller's sworn to get Toops, and he will if Toops is fool enough to give him the chance. Maybe the girl's right, and—but it's none of my business."

Carson reflected that none of these people would be likely to associate Toops's disappearance with Risi's death, which the newspaper reports had ascribed to suicide. Probably few if any of them were aware that Toops had been in Risi's employ. Betty Moore's intimacy with the missing servant was a new link in the chain and might prove valuable.

After learning that nothing further was to be discovered there of the missing Toops, Mordell did not linger long at the inn. Betty Moore, superciliously disdaining Miller's clumsy pleasantries, seated herself at a table near the windows. The detective's conclusion that she was waiting for some one was borne out by the appearance of Mira Janese. Striking points of resemblance in the two women left little doubt as to their relationship. They were sisters. The dis-

similarity in their names was probably due to the adoption of stage identities.

Other than the relation of sister, Carson wondered what else bound them together. Risi, Mira Janese's lover, was dead; Toops, Betty Moore's admirer, was missing under highly suspicious circumstances. What part had these two played in the drama which had resulted in the great tenor's death? What was the purpose of their meeting?

From Mira Janese's manner Carson gathered that she was a stranger at the Silver Seashell. Since the night before, when she had attempted to stab the butler at Risi's mansion, Carson had puzzled over her conduct. On recovering from the faint into which the announcement of Risi's death had thrown her, the mercurial actress had stubbornly refused to explain her conduct. Rice had been forced to release her.

After a brief conversation the sisters departed. Carson moved to the table which they had vacated. Luck was with him. A scrap of paper on the floor caught his eye.

"'M.' will do the trick of finishing 'R.' and everything will be ready. The *Mackal* will be waiting."

Who was this mysterious "M."? It might stand for Mordell, Mira, Moore, even Toops, whose first name was Mortimer. Without doubt "R." meant Risi. The *Mackal* was evidently a boat of some kind. But why a boat? Was Toops fleeing by water? Were the conspirators holding the boat for an emergency?

Carson's next objective was the wharves, which were but a short distance from the notorious Silver Seashell. He entertained little hope of finding the Mackal in the medley of craft which confronted his gaze, if indeed the *Mackal* proved to be a boat.

But once again luck was with him. There on the hull of a disreputable-looking tramp steamer was the barely distinguishable name, *Mackal*. A small boy stood before the detective proffering a folded paper. He thrust it into Carson's hand and disappeared behind the piled-up packing cases.

"If you will come on board the *Mackal* you will receive some important information about the case you are working on," he read.

Was it a trap? Carson's greatest boast was that he could take care of himself under any circumstances. He accepted the challenge boldly, for such it appeared to be, and went on board the *Mackal*. A rough-looking sailor saluted him.

"This way, sir," he grunted politely enough, "they're waiting for you."

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ELUSIVE TOOPS

EVERY panel in Risi's studio had been subjected to the most minute examination without disgorging the secret which the constant guard formerly maintained implied. False partitions and hidden cupboards, if, indeed, there were any, failed to manifest themselves. Interrogation of the servants a second and third time likewise failed to elicit any further information except that both Risi and Toops had been thoroughly disliked by all of them. Risi had had no friends. Neither had Toops, at least in the singer's household. Unfortunately, there were no intimates to disclose chance confidences.

Wearied by the apparent futility of his quest, Rice was about to leave Risi's mansion when an inspiration struck him. The massive wardrobe in the studio suddenly became an object of intense interest. Reflection recalled the surprising fact that the singer had met his death in a business suit. Why had he taken the trouble to change clothes before committing suicide, or why in any event? It seemed unreasonable that an opera singer, living in the glamour of the unreal, would cast aside the vestments of his calling in such a dramatic hour.

The costume was not to be found. Another mystery! Had Risi come straight to his mansion from the opera-house? Rice's discovery opened up a new train of throught. Perhaps the opera-house might offer some solution.

The aged doorkeeper repeated the story which the newspapers had told so graphically.

"Did you observe anything unusual about Risi's actions?" Rice asked.

"Yes, sir, I did. He came in a little late. He was in costume, and went right on the stage. There was nothing unusual about that. He often arrived already dressed in costume because he thought his voice went flat when he had to wait for his call. But there was one thing, sir, that struck me as very strange. In all the time I've been here he's never failed yet to give me a little silver before singing. He was superstitious, and thought a 'little charity,' as he called it, helped him. I used to tell him that, if it didn't help him, it certainly did help me. But last night, sir, he never even noticed me. When his voice broke, he came rushing out here like a madman. And would you believe it, sir? He actually tried to get out that door, that leads into the side alley, although he knew as well as myself that it had been nailed up for years. Then he turned away from it and went past me like a whirlwind. It was sad, sir."

"Was it his habit to leave here in costume, too?"

"Oh, no, sir, he never did that. When he used to come already dressed, he always sent around here for the costume the afternoon before the performance."

"Do you recall whether or not he sent after the costume he wore last night?"

"Now that you mention it, sir, I don't remember any one coming after it. But of course he must have sent for it——"

"I would like to have a look at his dressing-room."

The old doorkeeper led him to a large room luxuriously furnished. Rice threw open the doors of a large wardrobe which ran the entire width of the room. Suddenly his companion uttered an exclamation.

"Why, sir, there's the costume he wore last night."

"Let me see. Yes, it looks like it, but perhaps he had two?"

"I don't think so, sir."

"But you say he rushed right off the stage onto the street without stopping here to change his costume?"

"So he did, sir. I can't understand it."

Rice left the silent opera-house with half-formed conclusions that almost startled himself. There were features of this case that seemed absolutely impossible, yet there must be some way of explaining them. He returned to Headquarters lost in thought.

Betty Moore had a headache. She was all alone in her cheerful little room, very much alone, in fact, because she happened to be the only person in the house. The couple with whom she roomed had gone to the theatre, leaving the house in her care. She had been trying to read, but the light bothered her eyes. She turned it out and lay back on the bed lazily reflecting about the disappearance of Toops. Betty Moore wasn't by any means in love with Toops; she told herself that she would never love any man. But Toops had amused her; had been good to her in his way, and she missed his companionship. He was such a peculier impossible creature that she often wondered wherein his undoubted powers of fascination lay.

All at once a vague uneasiness began to creep over her. She was afraid of the dark; she was afraid to turn on the light. She tried to persuade herself that her fears were foolish, nevertheless they persisted. Was it a premonition of danger?

An ominous shadow blotted out the moonlight that streamed in through the window. Some one was on the back roof. A man's head and shoulders loomed up.

"Who is it? What do you want?" the girl demanded, gathering her negligee about her, her heart beating a fierce tattoo.

"Sh! It's me—Toops. Don't make any noise. I have something to tell you, Betty," came a hoarse, guarded whisper.

The sound of her own name reassured her for the moment. Then a terrible dread stole over her.

Suddenly the intruder seized her roughly by the throat. Too stunned to resist, she reeled and would have fallen had not her dancing training stood her in good stead. With the agility of a cat she eluded the cruel fingers and retreated.

"Toops, Toops, what are you trying to do?" she cried desperately. "Have you

gone crazy? Don't you know me? This is Betty, your Betty."

But her assailant came on and on. He struck at her savagely, his clenched fist glancing her shoulder. The blow nearly felled her, but with the courage of despair she rallied. The grim struggle seemed interminable. Then, in reaching back to steady herself against the intruder's fierce onslaught, her fingers encountered a hard, polished, round object. It was one of a pair of Indian-clubs which the last occupant of the room had left, and with which Betty often exercised. She grasped the handle firmly and struck out with all her strength. The man dropped like a log.

Breathing heavily, she sank on the bed, gathering her torn negligee about her. She rested only for a moment. Dragging herself to the door, she locked it on the outside and put the key in her pocket. Then she half-ran, half-fell down the stairs to the telephone in the lower hall.

She had taken the receiver off the hook before she realized that she must call some particular number. The police? No, although not a criminal herself, Betty had imbibed something of the distaste for the law which lurked in the atmosphere of the Silver Seashell. Suddenly she thought of Miller. He would be glad to help her. She did not fancy him particularly in the rôle of her knight errant, but this was not the time for splitting hairs. The attack of the last few minutes was still too real. She felt it in her bruised throat and her aching body. She called Miller. He was not at the inn.

Abruptly the door-bell rang. Who could it be? Still trembling from the encounter from which she had escaped, she unbolted the door cautiously. A lone man stood on the steps.

"Are you Miss Betty Moore?" he inquired, raising his hat politely.

"Yes," she replied, reassured by his manner and grateful for the unexpected aid.

"I am Inspector Rice of the Police Department," he went on crisply. "I would like to ask you some questions about your sister, Mira Janese. You need not answer them unless you wish to do so."

"Come in," she murmured faintly, her overwrought nerves making themselves felt now that the danger was over. After debating with herself a moment, she told her story in terse gasps. At the mention of Toops the Inspector's interest quickened amazingly.

"Quick. Show me the room," he cried.

Rice uttered an exclamation of disgust as his quick glance took in the disordered room. The dancers' assailant had apparently escaped through the window whence he came.

"He's gone. By the way, who was it you said you called for help?"

"Oh, only Miller, the proprietor of the Silver Seashell, you know. You see, he and Toops had a quarrel over me once and Toops knocked him down. I didn't like to call Miller because I never cared much for him, but he was the only one I could think of at the time."

"He's probably on his way over here now?"

"I don't think so. He wasn't there when I called——"

The door-bell broke in insistently.

Betty Moore hesitated.

"See who it is," her companion prompted. "I'll keep out of sight."

She opened the door without hesitation.

"Hello, Betty. I got over as soon as I could. I wasn't there, you know, when you called."

"Thanks for coming out, Miller. A man attacked me, but it's over now. He's gone——"

"I always told you to look out for Toops," he blurted.

"But how did you know it was Toops?"

"How? Oh, it couldn't very well be any one else. I just felt that it was."

Rice was far from satisfied with Miller's glib explanation. Evidently, Miller knew something of Toops's movements, more than he was willing to admit. It seemed hardly probable that Miller was in league with Toops in the light of the enmity which had formerly existed between them. After a few pleasantries the proprietor of the Silver Seashell took his leave.

"He's not acting at all as he usually does," Betty Moore told Rice.

She could conceive no reason why Toops should attack her. Rice furnished her with his telephone number for her use in face of further trouble and took his departure. Already his alert mind was constructing one solution of the night's events after another, only to hammer them to pieces beneath the exhaustive analysis to which he subjected them.

A small boy intercepted him as he was about to enter Headquarters. The urchin thrust a note into his hand and was gone before Rice could open it. It was written in Carson's unmistakable scrawl and bore his signature.

"Come at once," Rice read, "to the corner of Canal and Light Streets. Have discovered an important clue.—CARSON."

Something in the message caused Rice to smile.

Hardly ten minutes later the same urchin who had tendered the note approached the Inspector's familiar form at the corner of Canal and Light Streets.

"Mr. Carson sent me to show you the way," he said simply.

The boy led the way to a nearby wharf and indicated the *Mackal* with his pointed forefinger.

"Mr. Carson is on board that boat," he explained.

Rice did not hesitate, but followed him on board. Scarcely five minutes later the *Mackal* cast off and steamed down the harbor.

CHAPTER FIVE

MORDELL MAKES A CONFESSION

JULES MARTINEZ paced the floor of his little sitting-room restlessly.

The buzz of the bell interrupted his purposeless journey. He hastened to the door. One's visitors must not be left standing too long outside the door for the inspection of curious neighbors. His face relaxed at the sight of his visitor.

"You, dear," he welcomed softly. "Come in."

Mira Janese accepted his invitation with alacrity and sank into the most comfortable chair in the room. Martinez remained standing.

"Foolish boy!" she scolded affectionately; "you are worrying yourself to death. For one who had the nerve to do what you did this isn't the time for weakening. Of course you had no idea it would end in murder. Neither did I. But we are in it now and we have to go through with it."

Her sympathy and coolness acted as a sedative on his frayed nerves.

"Did you get your money?" she asked abruptly.

"I don't want it now. It would seem like——"

"You don't want it now!" she almost screamed. "Oh, Jules, don't be a fool. Money is money, no matter how it is earned, and goodness knows you need it badly enough. You are entirely too impractical. I'm going to call Mordell right now and make him come across while he's scared."

"Don't do that," he begged. "Give him a chance."

She shrugged her shoulders and picked up the telephone. He made no move to dissuade her.

"He's coming over right away with the money," she announced after a brief but pointed conversation.

Shortly afterward the bell buzzed.

"Mordell," she murmured, and rose to open the door.

Mordell came in like a wild bull.

"You damn blackmailers, I wish——" he began.

"So do we, Mordell," the actress broke in heatedly. "We wish we had never helped you with your dirty work, but we're in it now. Jules wants his money. In the meantime please keep your names to yourself."

"I may have been rude," he admitted, "but I'm worried. Here's your money, Jules. You see, I want to do the right thing by all of you."

Mira Janese laughed.

"You've got to," she teased. "If you don't you're out of luck, and you know it.

The police aren't going to be satisfied with a verdict of suicide in Risi's case. When they quizzed me I kept my mouth shut, but——"

"Don't get cocky, Mira," he warned. "You were hiding in that house when Risi was killed. You say you were just looking after things."

"Do you mean——"

"Oh, it's none of my business. Why should I care? I have enough to worry about. But I just want to give you people warning. If you try to get me into a tight corner you may find the tables turned. I don't intend to be made a fool of entirely. You don't know the half of it. I had to pay off Toops's landlord to keep his mouth shut. I've some news for you. Just see how I trust you."

"What is it? Tell us," Mira Janese asked eagerly, her curiosity piqued.

"Just this," he said impressively: "Detective Rice and his assistant aren't going to give us any more trouble."

"You haven't——?"

"Put them out of the way?" he completed. "Yes, that's just what I've done, but not in the way you think. Rice and that assistant of his were getting altogether too close to be comfortable. The captain of the *Mackal* was demanding his money. So I led both the clever detectives on board the *Mackal* and they are now on their way to a foreign clime. It'll be a long time before they get back, and in the meantime things will blow over and we can make our plans. They haven't the least idea in the world who's responsible for kidnapping them, and they won't be able to prove a thing. Pretty clever—eh?"

Mira Janese eyed him coldly.

"If you really want to know what I think, I think you're a fool to try a trick like that. Why, the police have got something good on you now."

"Bosh!" Mordell broke the silence which followed. "You people make me tired. I arranged everything nicely, and it would have gone through without a flaw if the unforeseen hadn't happened. Even as it stands, things are working my way. I have a few ideas left, you know. There isn't a flaw anywhere——"

"Oh, yes, there is, Mordell!"

"Who was that?"

Mordell's face was ashen. His ponderous jowls trembled.

"Some one is trying to frighten us," Mira said bravely.

Inspector Rice thrust aside the draperies which screened the bedroom from the sitting-room and entered.

"I've been very much interested in your conversation," he told them. "However, Mordell, I don't agree with you entirely. If your plot was perfect I wouldn't be here now, as I am, thanks to a convenient fire-escape."

Mordell shook his head dolefully.

"The game's up," he groaned. "How the devil did you get away?"

"I didn't," Rice returned, plainly enjoying the situation. "Carson's note gave me a code hint that all wasn't well on the ship and I let some one substitute for me. The rest, of course, was easy. I am telling you this to impress upon you the fact that 'the game is up,' just as you say. Now, I want you people to make a clean breast of what you know about Risi's death. You first, Mordell."

"I'll tell everything," Mordell declared.

"You know Risi and I had trouble," he began resolutely. "Aside from that he stood in my way. While he was the greatest tenor the world had ever known, I was only an ordinary tenor. He had ways of keeping me down and he put the screws on tight. I decided to get him out of the way—not to kill him—just to get him out of the way. His breakdown while on concert tour gave me an idea. I planned to substitute another singer for him and have that singer fail miserably. In the meantime Risi would be kidnapped and shipped to a foreign country, from which he would be a long time returning. When he did get back his story would not be believed, and in the meantime I could get his engagement at the opera-house."

"Then it was not Risi's voice that broke?"

"No; that was Martinez. He is somewhat of a singer—has played in grand opera in England, France and Italy. He was try-

ing to get an engagement here when I met him. I knew he was just the man I had been looking for."

"I had an inkling of the truth," Rice said quietly, "but it seemed too far-fetched to me. Martinez nearly lost his way in the opera-house. He also ran off in costume, leaving Risi's costume in the dressing-room."

"That's so," Mordell ruminated. "It wasn't as well arranged as I thought. As I was saying, the plot was to kidnap Risi. Toops was to attend to the kidnapping, and was to get him on board the *Mackal*. Toops came down into the yard and told Martinez that everything was all right. You know what happened at the opera-house."

"But about Risi's death?" Rice persisted.

"I don't know any more about that than you do," he asserted emphatically. "Toops disappeared and I haven't heard from him since. Now, Inspector, I hope you can keep my name out of this."

"I won't promise anything. I ought to place you under arrest for conspiring to kidnap Carson and myself, but we'll let that go for the present. What was your object in attempting to cover up Risi's murder by doing that?"

"Why—why, you see, I was half crazy with fear that I'd be drawn into the thing and ruined professionally. It doesn't look half so bad to me now that I've told you everything. But are you sure Risi didn't commit suicide?"

"There's no question about it," Rice insisted gravely. Now, Miss Janese, it's your turn. What were you doing in Risi's house on the night of the murder?"

"I had come to see Toops to make sure that the plans were running smoothly," she replied simply. "Of course I was very much frightened when the butler laid hold of me, and guess I did act suspiciously. But that's all."

"I expect all of you to co-operate in this investigation," the Inspector told them severely. "You have done all in your power to obstruct the course of the law. That's a serious offense. This is a warning.

"We must find Toops," he went on earnestly, "an you can give material assistance in finding him. He appeared last night at the home of Betty Moore, the dancer, and tried to strangle her. She beat him off and he escaped."

"My sister! Does he know her?"

Mira Janese was astonished. Mordell raised his heavy brows.

"He does," Rice vouchsafed, "very well indeed. He used to frequent the Silver Seashell Inn, and often met your sister there."

While Rice called up headquarters the others discussed the case in low tones.

"Risi's will has been found," he announced as he hung up the receiver, "and he has left everything—that the creditors don't get, of course, to——"

"To me?" Mira Janese interrupted breathlessly. "Quick, tell me."

He shook his head. The name he mentioned made her gasp with amazement.

Mordell and Martinez exchanged glances of bewilderment.

The scene had shifted with disconcerting suddenness and Rice was facing an unexpected field of investigation.

CHAPTER SIX

MORE COMPLICATIONS

CARSON voiced his surprise as Rice finished relating his experience. He had just told his chief the story of his own chase, ending at the *Mackal*, where he had outwitted the schemers when they demanded Rice's presence as a condition to disclosing important information, which they had promised.

"As a matter of fact," Carson commented, "Mordell and the others haven't cleared themselves at all. Their story is probably true as far as it goes, but there may be a lot more of it that they are keeping to themselves.

"I haven't by any means dismissed them from the investigation. By the way, let me have the address of the house where Toops roomed. I think I'll take a look around there."

Rice returned in a cheerful mood. Carson looked up from the accumulation of routine work which he had been examining.

"Anything new, Chief?"

"The next step is to see what Betty Moore has to say," Rice said briskly, as he turned to the telephone.

He hung up the receiver with a bang.

"Worse and more of it, as they say. She didn't know Risi, had never laid eyes on him, and certainly never spoke a word with him. Of course she has run across his name in the papers. At first she professed to think he was a prize fighter, but finally recollected that he was an opera singer. She seemed almost overcome at the news that Risi had left her his property. It's the first she's heard about it. However, she may have been prepared to play her part. She kept repeating that there must be some mistake. As for Toops, she swore she had no idea how he made his money—thought he was a business man or something of the sort. What do you think of that?"

"I think our pretty young friend is rather careless in handling the truth. That's a mild way of putting it."

The Inspector was amused at his assistant's earnestness.

"Maybe her relations with Risi were so well covered that she feels that she can take a chance in bluffing us."

"Yes, that's true, but let's let the matter rest for the present. We have a gentleman on our calling list today—Miller—who runs the Silver Seashell Inn. You've already been there, so you know what he's like. Now, I haven't any impossible theories about Miller. I don't think he murdered Risi or even knew him. But he does know something about Toops. When Betty Moore was attacked Miller concluded immediately that Toops was her assailant. His conduct that night was suspicious, to say the least. Combine that with what you observed the other day and we have at least justification to ask him a few questions. Let's go."

"I'm ready."

"The Silver Seashell Inn was deserted. Only the ill-favored Miller was there behind the bar with his head in his hands as if in deep thought. He looked up quickly at the entrance of the two detectives. His face, naturally grooved in hard, pitted lines, seemed cast in a mask of terror. His small, furtive eyes roved restlessly.

"What'll you have?" he demanded, taking up two glasses with a poor pretense at nonchalance.

"I am Inspector Rice of the Police Department, and this is Mr. Carson, my assistant," Rice began with cruel deliberation.

"We are looking for a man by the name of Toops, who is missing. We know that he came here often and we want you to tell us all you know about him."

"I do know a little about him," the bartender admitted. "Not much, but I'll be glad to tell you what I know. Wait a minute until I can get some one to look after the bar. Then I'll take you in one of the back rooms."

A few moments later the three were chatting amiably.

"I don't suppose you know that Toops attempted to kill Betty Moore lately?" Rice shot at him abruptly.

"Yes, she called me and I went over. He was gone when I got there."

"I was behind the portieres when you arrived, Miller."

"You were! Why did she call me, then?"

The man was strictly on the defensive, as evidenced by his failure to evince curiosity under such provocation as Rice held out.

"I'll explain that later," Rice said, adding, to the other's confusion. "In the meantime I'd like to know how you knew it was Toops who attacked Betty Moore?"

"She told me."

"No, she didn't."

The unprepossessing proprietor of the Silver Seashell was patently badly shaken.

"I thought she told me," he stammered, "but if she didn't I must have guessed it."

"Here are the facts," the inexorable Rice persisted, sensing that Miller knew much more than he was telling: "Toops has disappeared. You are the only enemy he had so far as we know. You had threatened to kill him. You are deliberately attempting to deceive us, and are holding something back. It leads only to one conclusion."

"But I tell you I know nothing more about him," Miller protested.

"Well, then, suppose I arrest you for the murder of Toops?" Rice concluded sternly, shooting the last arrow in his quiver.

Miller paled.

"We know you killed Toops, Miller," Rice proceeded with studied confidence. "We don't lack a shred of evidence. The game is up. You can give us the details if you wish to."

There was a hopeless mental struggle in Miller's brain, and it ended in a panic—a wild effort to defend himself.

"Yes, I did kill him," he affirmed dully. "I hated him and he came between me and the girl I loved. I may as well tell you about it. I thought that I was hard, that I could kill and forget, but I soon found out I couldn't. I have been living in a state of terror. I couldn't sleep nights; I nearly went crazy. Always that face and stooped form! It was I who attacked Betty Moore the other night disguised as Toops. She knew that I had been laying for Toops, and she threatened to make trouble for me if he didn't show up. I meant to kill her, but she was too much for me. She thought I was Toops—that helped my plans. I heard her calling me on the telephone to come and help. It was funny. I had just tried to kill her, and she was calling me up to help her. I walked around a few blocks and then came back to the house. But I'll tell you about killing Toops. I followed him from here——"

Miller jerked out a gun.

"Quick, Bob!" yelled Rice.

It was too late. Simultaneously with the crack of the pistol, which now clattered to the floor from his pulseless hand, Carson fired. The life thread of the ill-fated proprietor of the Silver Seashell snapped and his great body lurched forward.

Rice frowned as he called the nearest doctor.

Carson did not attempt to conceal his disappointment.

"Well, Chief, I guess we have come to the end of our rope this time," he said gloomily.

Rice eyed him thoughtfully

"There is only one more thing to do," he replied, "and that is rather a dramatic proceeding. However, in the light of what has happened we'll try it and see what occurs."

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE SECRET OF THE STUDIO

OFFICERS RICE and Carson were sitting in Risi's studio.

"I think the solution lies right in this room," Carson declared for perhaps the hundredth time. "If we could only discover the secret of this room we would have everything."

"I agree with you," Rice mused in turn. "This 'forbidden' room has caused me more than one moment of thought. As you know, I've explored it and have had it examined time and time again by experts without any result whatsoever. I have an idea, however, that needs confirmation before I express it even to you. It may prove to be the solution or it may be sadly disappointing. In the meantime it's far too wild to advance. By the way, did you round up the suspects?"

"Yes, sir; every one of them—Mordell, Martinez, Betty Moore, Mira Janese, Risi's chauffeur, his housekeeper and Elsie, the maid. I also included Mordell's blackmailing friend and the doorkeeper at the opera-house. I impressed all of them with the fact that their absence would be interpreted as suspicious. They'll all be here."

"Good! In the meantime let's take another look around."

She led the way to the small bedroom where the dead singer had slept. Carson followed silently. A single mahogany bed, dresser, chiffonier and several comfortable chairs completed the furnishings of the room, which, despite its simplicity, gave one the impression of grandeur.

Rice approached the bed and laid his hand upon the foot. He eyed his assistant quizzically.

"Take a good look at this bed and think a little," he said. "See if it doesn't awaken a question in your mind."

At first reflective, Carson's eyes flashed with the inspiration which his Chief's question awakened.

"But is it possible?" he literally whispered, such was his astonishment. "If it turns out that way it'll be like a bombshell!" he went on excitedly, without waiting for Rice to reply.

They returned to the studio in silence. Rice stroked his chin nervously, a habit of his when thinking deeply. Carson leaned against a massive cabinet built into the wall.

His fingers followed the carved design nervously. He was pondering over the strange vista which Rice's question had opened up to view. His fingers found the scrollwork curiously absorbing. Suddenly he uttered an exclamation of astonishment.

The cabinet, weighing several hundred pounds, began to move from one end as on a hinge. A small door lay directly behind it. The detective examined this door with no little interest.

"An extraordinary piece of work," Rice commented. "We looked for a false partition in that cabinet, but never dreamed that the thing was hinged on one end. Listen! See this door is so cleverly and scientifically constructed that it doesn't sound hollow. The cabinet must swing on ball-bearings it moves so easily."

A few seconds more and the spring catch which secured the little door gave way beneath the pressure of their prying fingers. When the door swung open a narrow flight of steps confronted their gaze.

"The secret—at last!" Carson breathed his excitement.

But Rice was not so sanguine.

"Yes, this supports the theory we have already formed, but in itself it isn't important because it doesn't really amount to much as actual proof. Yes, I'll admit that I'm mighty glad to find it, though. It makes the investigation more interesting and——"

He paused abruptly, closed the little door noiselessly, and stepped back, putting his finger to his lips significantly.

"S-s-h!" he whispered; "some one's coming up."

The suddenness with which he jerked open the little door nearly precipitated Mira Janese on her hands and knees.

"I expected you," Rice told her, "but I didn't think you would come that way. Perhaps you will be good enough to explain what it means."

"Always explanations," she sulked. "You might have given me a little warning before opening that door. I might have broken my neck. I'm sorry to disappoint you, but my presence in the private passageway doesn't mean a thing. I knew it was there, of course. I arrived early and thought I'd come up and listen in on what was going on."

"How did you learn about the passage?"

"I was up here one day when Risi came through the little door——"

"I thought you had never been up here," Rice interrupted sharply.

"I have been here," she confessed with downcast eyes. "You will understand why I did not speak of it before. It had nothing to do with Risi's death, and why should I tell—but Risi was very angry when I caught him coming through the little door. He made me swear never to tell anybody about it. It leads into the library."

"Are you telling us everything now, Miss Janese? Isn't it true that you do know much more about Risi than you have admitted?"

"No, no. I swear that is all I know."

"I am glad to see that every one is here," Rice began. "I think that within an hour we will establish without a doubt the identity of the murderer of Signor Risi."

Mira Janese answered Rice's questions in a voice which was strangely unlike her usual assertive tone. Rice probed her love affair with Risi as deeply as he could without causing her undue embarrassment. He required her to report favorite expressions of the dead tenor and to relate incidents concerning him as accurately as possible. From her he turned to Betty Moore and pursued the same line with reference to Toops. Betty denied vehemently that she had known Risi.

Suddenly the Inspector veered his attack to the maid whose testimony regarding Risi's last moments had been so important.

"You had a love affair with Risi, did you not?" he demanded.

"Why—er, yes, sir," she stammered, blushing.

"You had a love affair with Toops, too, didn't you?"

Again she crimsoned and answered in a barely audible affirmative.

"You have done wrong by concealing these affairs," Rice told her in conclusion. "They are much more important than you think, and had you told the truth sooner much trouble would have been saved."

At his request the housekeeper next repeated her testimony. Rice questioned one and then another until every one except perhaps himself and Carson was hopelessly confused.

"Mordell, why did you purchase a revolver on the afternoon Risi died?" Rice inquired abruptly.

Mordell's jaw dropped.

"I wanted to have one for protection in case of need," he hastened to explain. "I always have a large sum of money and valuables about. I guess it was just a coincidence that it was on that afternoon."

"You were also in this room that evening?"

"Yes—with Toops, as I told you, making the plans. I had the revolver in case anything slipped up——"

"And something did slip up?"

"No, no—not in that way. I was afraid of Risi, afraid that he might kill me if he caught me there with Toops. I merely wanted to be able to defend myself. I wouldn't have come here, only I was afraid Toops wouldn't manage rightly and there was so much at stake. I had to come here to see him. He wouldn't come to me."

"Do you realize the position in which your admissions put you, Mordell? You confess that you hated Risi, that you had the revolver prepared for trouble, and that you were in this very room where he was found dead later. The evidence——"

"But you haven't proved that Risi didn't commit suicide," Mordell broke in wildly.

"That's easy. A glance at the wound in his head convinced me that the revolver had not been fired at close range as the powder shots indicated. Furthermore, the second shot which Elsie heard was not accounted for—that bullet couldn't be found. The conclusion was that Risi was shot from a distance and that his murderer discharged a blank cartridge at close range after he had fallen to the floor to strengthen the appearance of suicide which the revolver at his finger-tips suggested. Our evidence would convince any jury."

In desperation Mordell grasped the arms of his chair until they creaked. His eyes glaring and with turgid veins starting from his bloated face, he pointed an accusing finger at Mira Janese.

"If any one murdered Risi, there's the murderess," he shouted.

"Oh, I didn't, I didn't," Mira Janese sobbed hysterically, shrinking from his accusing finger.

"I think you've been punished enough," Rice said, breaking the tense silence which followed. "I felt that you deserved something for plotting against Risi and for attempting to stand in the way of the law. But this has gone far enough. You have all read about Miller's confession in the paper. We know that he killed Toops. Well, we have discovered that the Risi investigation and Toops's case hang together.

"Then Toops killed Risi?" Mordell asked with deferential eagerness.

"Yes——" Rice began, and turned to answer the telephone.

"The report I have just received completes the case as far as I am concerned," Rice announced as he hung up the receiver. "The murder of Risi and the secret of this 'forbidden' room is solved. Most of you know that Risi allowed no one on this floor, except himself, of course, and Toops—that is why I call it the 'forbidden' room.

"It isn't customary for me to make an announcement of the kind I am going to make and to explain the course which we took in arriving at the facts. However, since every one here is greatly interested and since you all came here tonight to help I am going to make an exception for this once. You are now going to have an unusual experience. You are going to hear some startling news before it comes out in the

papers. This will be a headliner, too. Ready, boys?"

The newspaper men who had been invited there nodded respectfully. To them Rice was not only an idol but a friend, and they knew from experience that a good story was coming.

"Miller, as you know, confessed to killing Toops," Rice began. "His motive in committing the crime was to put out of the way a man he hated intensely—the man who had beaten him in the presence of that woman. He planned the murder for a considerable time and followed Toops many times to this house. On the night of the murder he secreted himself in this room. He had discovered in some way that Toops came up here alone. Toops came in. Miller waited his opportunity and shot him dead. He had made his plans carefully. He wished to avoid the risk of discovery which he feared investigation would bring. And so as his rival lay dead upon this floor he fired a blank cartridge from another revolver directly against his forehead in order to carry out the impression that Toops had shot himself. Then he placed the revolver in Toops's hand and fled——"

"But you are telling us about Risi——" some one broke in.

"One moment," Rice proceeded, "and I'll explain. As Miller fled Elsie mistook him for Toops. He probably endeavored to look as much like Toops as possible and may have even taken the trouble to disguise himself. Now, impossible as it may seem, Risi and Toops were the same person, and when Miller killed Toops he little realized that he was stilling what was perhaps the greatest voice the world has ever heard."

"Toops—Risi? Then he knew all about ——" Mira Janese sobbed.

"Yes; for some reason, just a whim or probably because he wished to know what was going on about him, Risi evolved the idea of becoming at will his own manservant, Toops. No wonder he laughed when he was telling Mrs. Pointdexter about the new servant whom he had engaged. No wonder, too, that no one ever saw master and servant together, except that one time when Martinez was playing the rôle of Risi. A few touches of cosmetic here and there, different clothes, a studied stoop, and above all a whining voice, which no one would ever have ascribed to the full-throated Risi, made all the difference in the world.

"He must have enjoyed the plot against himself in which he was involved on both sides," Rice went on impressively. "When Miller killed him he was probably biding his time for a spectacular unmasking. That's the whole story. You can fill in the gaps yourself."

"Now I know why Risi left me his money —because he was Toops," Betty Moore said tearfully.

"Yes," Rice went on, "and that fact was one of several which set us on the right path. There was only one single bed here on this floor, yet two men were supposed to have slept here. That raised a question. Tonight I discovered that in their love affairs Toops and Risi were very much alike and used many uncommon expressions. Finally, the discovery of the blank cartridge revolver in Miller's belongings and the result of a careful study of fingerprints found in the places which Toops and Risi frequented furnished absolute proof."

"But why was this room 'forbidden'?" one of the correspondents inquired.

"That is obvious. Risi could not have lived a double existence had he not insured himself absolutely against intrusion. The secret passage behind the cabinet helped the deception, too, because he could appear and disappear at will."

The extras were already in the hands of the newsboys when Rice and Carson left the restaurant where they had stopped for a substantial meal, a custom which marked the successful completion of every case.

"It was a strange case, Chief."

"Yes," was Rice's reflection, "one of the strangest in all my experience. Poor Risi! Little did he realize that Toops, whom his brilliant imagination created, would one day rise up and kill him. Yes, Toops was Risi's greatest rôle and he will be remembered by it long after his most famous opera characterizations are forgotten."

(*The end.*)

The Accomplice

By WILLIAM FILBERT TOBIAS

CHAPTER ONE

RAND WILLOUGHBY entered Detective Headquarters and seated himself before the desk, awaiting instructions.

"Willoughby," began the Chief, after he had bitten off the end of a huge black cigar, lighted it and took several preliminary puffs, "here's a case for you. John C. Newberry, one of our wealthy citizens, has received a blackmailing note.

"It's a funny thing, Willoughby," he continued, "the way these things happen. Here's this man, Newberry, for instance—unoffending old gentleman—lives all alone; that is, he has several servants, but no relatives. Lives up on Glendale Drive in the old Carter mansion. Must be worth piles of money. But how any one could have a grievance against him I don't see.

"This thing must come to an end. A man's not safe in his own house. If there's any one who can run this case down it's you. That's all."

Detective Willoughby rose.

"I'll do the best I can, Chief," he said earnestly.

The older man also rose and laid a hand on the other's shoulder.

"I know you will, my boy. I'm sending Winters and Murphy with you."

He bade the detective good-day, but when Willoughby had reached the door he halted him.

"Lieutenant Burton is leaving next month, Willoughby. I'm looking for a good man to promote to his place. Do you know where I can find him?"

The opening and closing of the door was the only answer.

CHAPTER TWO

THE three officers arrived at the palatial residence, and were admitted by Mr. Newberry himself. He seemed greatly relieved at their arrival.

"Come right in," he invited. He spoke and acted like a man who knew refinement. He appeared to be slightly past sixty, and his worried look seemed to be habitual. His well-trimmed Van Dyke beard, slightly tinged with gray, gave him an added look of distinction.

When they were seated in the library, to which Newberry had led them, the old gentleman continued: "I received a blackmailing note three days ago."

Willoughby glanced about the room, while the host went to a desk in one corner and pulled out a paper. He handed it to the detective, who read it through carefully.

"Dear Sir," the message read, "I am informed that you are one of our city's five richest men. I consider this a crime for which you must pay. Leave $30,000 in unmarked bills of small denomination in the twin oak tree situated about 200 yards south of where Glendale Road crosses the Newton pike. You must either forfeit the money or you will die.

"P. S.—You have until 9.00 p. m., Thursday, June 24."

"Whew," commented Detective Willoughby, "rather a stiff price. The fellow who sent it must have had nerve, anyway. What you should have done, Mr. Newberry, was to have told us of this as soon as you received the note."

He examined the message carefully. It was a piece of plain stationery, the kind that can be purchased anywhere for five

cents a tablet. The words on it were printed, and a close search failed to reveal any fingerprints.

Willoughby paused before the desk from which the note was taken.

"Hmm," he mused, distractedly, "this is a fine old desk here. What sort of wood is in it, Mr. Newberry? I'm interested in antiques."

"Oak," replied the owner, somewhat annoyed by the seeming irrelevancy of the question.

The detective paused to admire the workmanship, and ran his hand over the top of the desk.

"It's in rough finish," he said, somewhat surprised; "isn't it?"

"Yes," replied Newberry impatiently. "It has been in the family for three or four generations now. But what's all this got to do with our affair? The blackmailers asked for money and not furniture. Besides, I very much doubt if they could appreciate art."

"Pardon my curiosity," said Willoughby, "but, you see, whenever I come across an antique I forget about everything else. Now, the note asks for $30,000 by nine o'clock tonight, or an unpleasant visit by the writer. It's 10.15 now," he said, glancing at his watch. "That gives us about nine hours in which to prepare."

"I think it would be best to get a few of the facts," put in Winters. He was about ten years older than Willoughby, and rather envious of the latter's success. "Do you suspect anybody—any enemies?" he queried, turning to Newberry.

"No, I mind my own business, and leave other people alone," he replied. "I live here all alone, reading and writing a little, and I've harmed no one."

"Well, I suppose it's protection you want, Mr. Newberry," said Willoughby. "You've given us short notice, and about the best thing we can do it to wait for something to turn up."

He walked over to the old desk and became absorbed in an examination of it. It seemed to hold a strange sort of fascination for him.

CHAPTER THREE

THAT night the four men were seated around a table playing penny-ante to pass away the time. Newberry was a heavy loser, and Willoughly laughingly referred to his bad luck.

"If it wasn't for the fact that you are losing," he remarked jocularly, "I would think that you had engineered a little scheme to bunco us out of our pennies. As it is, it looks as though our friends, the blackmailers, had forgotten us."

Newberry nodded.

"Let them come. I think we can give them a warm reception." He pulled a revolver from his pocket. "You see, I'm armed, too."

His self-satisfied air grated on the detective.

"A pistol's a mighty good thing," he said, "if a man knows how to use it."

"I think I can handle one about as well as the average retired citizen," returned Newberry. "If you'll excuse me a moment, I have something I wish to show you."

He went into the next room, Winters accompanying him, and when he returned a few minutes later he was carrying a frame on which there were a half-dozen medals.

"Just a few trophies of my marksmanship," he explained. "Of course, I was a good deal younger when I won these than I am now, but I can still shoot a little."

"You have the coolness and nerve of a marksman," complimented Willoughby. "Your deal, I believe, Murphy."

Newberry returned the pistol to his pocket, and cut for the deal. The betting was lively, and quite a few coppers were pushed to the center of the table. Murphy called, and the men laid down their hands.

"I've got you," exulted Newberry, laying down a diamond flush.

He stopped. The clock in the hall was striking nine.

Newberry paled a little in spite of his efforts at self-control. He raised his glass to his lips to drink.

A shriek split the silence. The men rushed to the window. Across the way, a man lay sprawled out grotesquely in a chair.

A newspaper lay across his knees. Evidently he had been reading when disturbed by some unusual catastrophe.

The four men ran across the lawn to where the man lay stretched out. He was dead, a bullet having entered his heart.

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Newberry. "The blackmailers got the wrong house."

"It's Attorney Martin," announced Murphy, after glancing at the dead man.

"Yes," agreed Winters. "From the way the bullet entered the body the murderer must have stood between this house and Newberry's."

"Wrong, Winters," stated Willoughby. "The murderers did not stand between this house and Newberry's."

"All right, Mr. Know-It-All," sneered Winters. "I suppose the man committed suicide, and then hid the gun."

"The man who shot Martin had a very keen mind, and did everything in his power toward making his escape clear. But I am positive that the assassin was in Newberry's house when the crime was committed."

"You must be wrong, Willoughby," put in Murphy. "One of the boys would have been sure to have seen him."

"Don't keep us in suspense, Willoughby," mocked Winters. "Who killed Martin?"

"The man who killed Martin is—— Just a moment, Mr. Newberry. Where are you going?"

"I have a few bottles of brandy in my cellar, Willoughby," replied the trembling man. "I need a few drinks to steady me up."

"I think what I have to say will interest you, also. Mr. Newberry, I arrest you for the murder of Attorney Martin."

Newberry forced a laugh.

"Why, you must be crazy. I was with you when the thing happened."

"Yes, Willoughby, cut out the joking," put in Winters.

"Newberry was with us all the time," admitted Willoughby. "But his accomplice wasn't."

"His accomplice. So you think he had some outside help, eh?" questioned Murphy.

"Come, come," interposed Newberry. "Mr. Willoughby, your arguments don't seem to hold together very well. You claim that I murdered Martin before your very eyes, and that I had an accomplice. I call on you to produce the accomplice."

"All that will come in due time," replied Willoughby; "but first I want to ask some questions. When did you get out of jail, and when did you add the "New" to your name, Mr. *Berry?*"

Newberry grew ghastly white.

"How—how the devil did you know——" He stopped. "You'll never take me, you ——," he cursed.

He pulled out his revolver and pointed it at Willoughby. Winters promptly knocked the gun out of his hand and pinned his arms behind his back. Willoughby put on the cuffs while the other two men held the frenzied Newberry.

"You took an awful chance, Willougby," said Winters sharply. "If I hadn't stopped him he might have blown you off the map."

"Thanks, old man," replied Willoughby gratefully. "I'll not forget it soon."

While the two other men were leading their prisoner to the waiting police car Willoughby stooped and picked up the pistol. Smiling, he broke it open and looked into the chambers.

It was empty.

CHAPTER FOUR

RAND WILLOUGHBY was once more seated before his chief, and this time both men were smoking.

"But how could Newberry pull the trick of killing Martin right before your very eyes?" the Chief was asking.

"That was where the accomplice came in," replied Willoughby, puffing complacently.

"The accomplice? What the——"

"Wait until I explain," interrupted Willoughby hastily. "You see, the man's real name is Berry. Do you remember the old "Rat Alley" gang of Boston, the gang that was sent to the pen about twenty years ago for the Favershaw robbery? Well, Berry, or "Boston Berries," as he was better

known, was a member of that gang. Attorney Martin gave him ten years longer than the rest. Convicted him of carrying a revolver. Berry swore that it was a frame-up, and promised vengeance against Martin.

"Berry got out of the pen about a year ago. It seems that he left quite a large sum of money in trust with his brother. He used most of the money to carry out his vow. He bought the old Carter mansion and, biding his time, worked out a scheme to kill Martin.

"He wanted a perfect alibi, so he framed a blackmailing letter, and—well, you know the result."

"But his accomplice?"

"The accomplice? That was an ingenious mechanical contrivance that Berry had erected in his basement. It consisted of a rifle with a Maxim silencer attached to a time-clock. Knowing the attorney's habit of sitting in that particular chair every evening, he had the gun trained on him. The timer was set for nine o'clock, and at that time Berry was playing cards with Winters, Murphy and myself. So you see, it did look like a perfect alibi."

"Then how in the ——" started the Chief.

"Just a moment," interrupted Willoughby. "I knew that Berry had written that blackmailing note, and on that old desk of his, for I could read the grain behind the printed words."

"But, say, Willoughby," the Chief put in, "how did you know it was Berry?"

"Well, you see," replied Willoughby, "I was only a boy when Berry was sent to the pen, but my father was one of the detectives in the case. He showed me the pistol that Berry had been caught carrying. It had a diamond engraved on the butt of it—a sort of superstitious good-luck sign. Somehow I remembered that gun all these years.

"Berry played to diamonds in our card game even though he lost continually. And once during the evening Berry showed his gun. It had a diamond on the butt. When Berry left the room to get some marksmanship trophies, I emptied the gun. But, you see, I didn't count on the accomplice."

"Well, I'll be——" started the Chief.

"Yes, it was a clever scheme," interrupted Willoughby hastily, "and Berry deserves his punishment."

MISSING WITH $140,000

POLICE of West New York, N. J., inclined to the belief that George F. Moller, thirty-five, of West Hoboken, who disappeared June 23 with approximately $140,000 in cash on his person is another victim of Rum Row piracy.

Moller was reported missing Aug. 7 by his wife, who explained to Detective Lieut. Otis she had not become alarmed sooner because her husband was in the habit of being away from home for days or weeks at a time in connection with his business. She said he dealt in real estate, but the police allege Moller's connection was with a rum-running syndicate.

Otis's investigation revealed that Moller was driven to Sheepshead Bay by Dan O'Connell, a West New York chauffeur, June 23. From there he called up Mrs. Moller, telling her he was going away on business and would send his Packard sedan back in O'Connell's care. Carl Rettick of No. 135 20th street, West New York, told Otis he was associated with Moller in business and was on board a ship off Sheepshead Bay with him several days after June 23. Moller, he said, started ashore in a hired boat to bank $60,000 collected on the ship and was never seen by him since. Mrs. Moller said her husband had more than $80,000 of his own when he left home to go on a business trip.

What Handwriting Reveals

CONDUCTED BY LOUISE RICE

Send us a specimen of your writing with the coupon printed on page 63 and Miss Rice will analyze the handwriting free of charge. The answer will be published in a future number of this magazine. Only a limited number of replies can be printed in each issue, owing to lack of space. If you desire an earlier reply in the form of a personal letter from Miss Rice, send us the sample of your writing and the coupon, and enclose 10 cents and a self-addressed stamped envelope, to cover the cost of handling, stationery, etc., and Miss Rice will promptly send you an answer. No readings will be given unless accompanied by a coupon for each individual.

—THE EDITOR.

CARRIE R.—No, I don't think that all women ought to marry. In fact, I think that some women ought *not* to marry, and for them to do so is a misfortune for themselves and for the man and for the possible children. You are one of those women, and if you are wise you will turn right to that profession which you have taken up and will make it your life work. Few women are great mathematicians, and I am sure that you will have little difficulty in forging ahead. I don't think you abnormal—no. There is a certain type of man and woman which is not really suited for a domestic life, but which is, like yourself, of inestimable value to the world. You can be a wonderful friend, especially to women, and I hope that you will make that your avocation as your profession is your vocation.

SONNY.—It is indeed a sad thing, Sonny, to find out that the girl we have been idealizing is merely a selfish flirt who has been trying to get money and presents only out of a real love that is offered her; but—bless you, boy, there are lots of fine girls, as loving and as true as a poet's dream. Don't at twenty try to set what ideal of woman is to be for the future. Your handwriting shows me that you are very affectionate and very sensitive, so, of course, this has been a sad blow to you; but then, you and she are both just children. Oh, I know that you consider yourself a seasoned man of the world, Sonny, but you will think something different when you are no more than a year or two older. Plunge with all your might into helping that good father of yours and be thankful that he and you have that prosperous farm. A farmer who is doing well and who has conveniences in his home and for his work is the one man in these trying days who is still more or less his own master.

J. K. LOUGHLIN.—There is nothing in your handwriting to show why you should be so unsuccessful. You have a well-balanced will and good judgment and far more self-control and ambition than many, so the trouble is not there. I would suspect that you had never gotten work among your equals. You know, it is a great mistake for us to make close associates of people who do not understand us nor our ways nor our thoughts. If you are doing the work suggested by the letterhead on which you write, then you are surely misplaced. Instead of worrying, then, as to the development of character, I would, if I were you, seek actively for work which is more suitable. You write an excellent "hand," and you have a head for figures. Why don't you start out by trying to get a position as timekeeper with that firm? Don't let your diffidence trouble you. Go right to that man in the executive office who has been so kind to you and tell him just about what you have told me. Take my word for it, he will be interested and not displeased, as you fear.

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The clue that betrayed a criminal.

In addition to all the above material there will be a number of short articles on odd subjects of vital interest to our readers. In short, the next number will be packed full of splendid reading matter. If you like it, mention our magazine to your friends.

THE EDITOR.

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

The feature stories already published in this magazine are worth reading. The following are the titles of the novelettes contained in the numbers already printed.

110 "A Whispering Mummy," by Chas. F. Oursler.
111 "Trapping the Jewel Smugglers," by B. Poynter.
112 "The Missing Evidence," by Harold F. Podhaskl.
113 "A Clue by Radio," by Capt. Jack Static.
114 "The District Attorney's Secret," by C. Oursler.
115 "A Man From Headquarters," by H. Craigie.
116 "The Girl in the Case," by Carl Glick.
117 "A Scientific Detective," by D. G. McDonald.
118 "Number Nine Queer Street," by Jack Bechdolt.
119 "Trailed by a Private Detective," by Gottlieb Jacobs.
120 "The Mouse Trap," by Edith Sessions Tupper.
121 "A Radio Mystery," by Capt. Jack Static
122 "The Clawing Death," by Beulah Poynter.
123 "A Master of Millions," by Chas. Fulton Oursler
124 "The Secret of Room 13," by Hamilton Craigie.
125 "Six Months to Live," by George Bronson-Howard.
126 "Seals of Wax," by Jack Bechdolt.
127 "When Crooks Conspire," by Harold F. Podhaskl.
128 "The Mystery of the Blue Car," by H. Craigie
129 "The Detective and the Law," by Frederick F. Shuey.
130 "The Hand in the Dark," by Chas. F. Oursler.
131 "The Trail of a Rogue," by George Bronson-Howard.
132 "The Woman from Nowhere," by Jack Bechdolt
133 "The Time Detective," by Frank Blighton.
134 "The Whispering-Room," by Frederick C. Davis.
135 "One Clue Missing," by Chas. F. Oursler.
136 "The Doom of the Damned," by Joe Burke.
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138 "Mrs. Deane's Jewels," by Beatrice S. Luisi.
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141 "The Triple Cross," by Hamilton Craigie.
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146 "The Argentine Ruby," by Beulah and Shirley Poynter.
147 "The Barrington Arms Case," by Jack Bechdolt.
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159 "The River Pirates," by Hamilton Craigie.
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161 "At 2 A. M.," by Beulah Poynter.
162 "The Intriguers," by Grover Kidwell.
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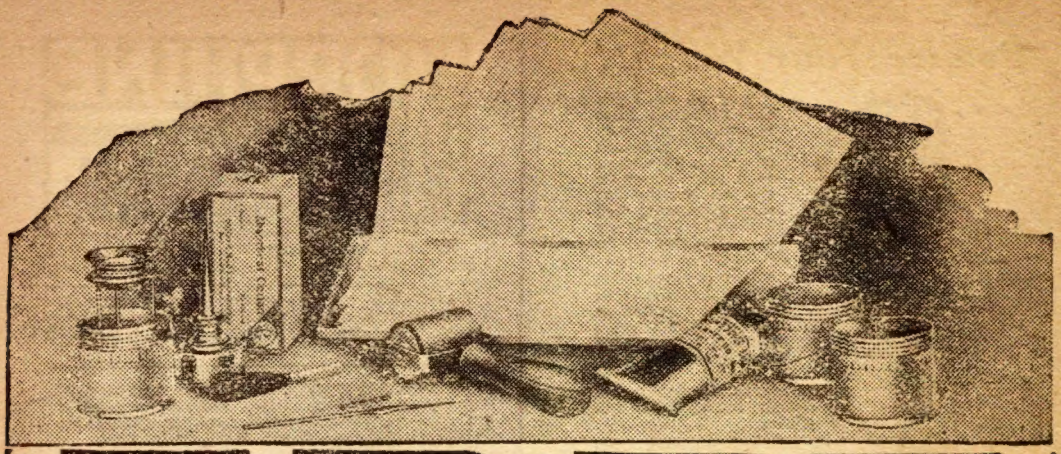

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